SPIDER-MAN
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT
ONE MORE DAY
WITH JOE QUESADA AND J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI
COMPLETE COVERAGE OF TWO SEMINAL SPIDER-MAN EVENTS!
BRAND NEW DAY
WITH WRITERS AND ARTISTS:
DAN SLOTT ★ STEVE McNIVEN
BOB GALE ★ MARC GUGGENHEIM
CHRIS BACHALO ★ ZEB WELLS
MARVEL
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Over the last few years, the drumbeat has grown louder concerning the future direction of Spider-Man and Peter Parker. What is his standing with Mary Jane? Will his Aunt May live or die? Is Peter still the everyman he needs to be in the Marvel Universe? "One More Day" and "Brand New Day" are two mega-events that decisively reveal the answers to all those questions, and this special issue of *Marvel Spotlight* is one-stop reading to get you ready!

I: Inside One More Day With Joe Quesada

The artist of "One More Day" is also Marvel's editor in chief. Joe Quesada shares with *Spotlight* how genies are put back into bottles, how the buck stops with him and the exciting future of Spider-Man!

II: One More Day, Seven Amazing Years: A Spider-Man Storyteller!

No writer has been more indelibly linked to the trials and travails of Peter Parker in the 21st century than J. Michael Straczysnki. JMS speaks from the heart with *Spotlight* about his time behind the typewriter guiding Spider-Man's destiny for the last seven years.

III: Brand New Day Team One: Dan Slott & Steve McNiven

It's time to take a look at Spider-Man's *Brand New Day*, with Dan Slott discussing the title he was born to write and Steve McNiven taking us inside his thoughts on being the penciler of *Amazing Spider-Man*!

IV: Brand New Day Team Two: Marc Guggenheim & Salvador Larroca

Marc Guggenheim may be a relatively new writer on the Marvel scene, but he isn't intimidated: a regular gig writing *Wolverine* will take care of any such jitters! We talk with Marc plus take a look at some luscious new Spidey art by Sal Larroca!

V: Brand New Day Team Three: Bob Gale & Phil Jimenez

Who better to take Peter Parker into the future than Bob Gale, writer/creator of the timeless *Back to the Future* film franchise! Bob is on hand to talk shop on Spidey, plus we have lots of Phil Jimenez preview art to show off!

VI: Brand New Day Team Four: Zeb Wells & Chris Bachalo

The fourth "Brand New Day" team is on hand to chat with *Spotlight*, with writer Zeb Wells and Chris Bachalo taking us inside their preparations for writing and drawing Spider-Man!

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Editor in Chief: Joe Quesada
Publisher: Dan Buckley

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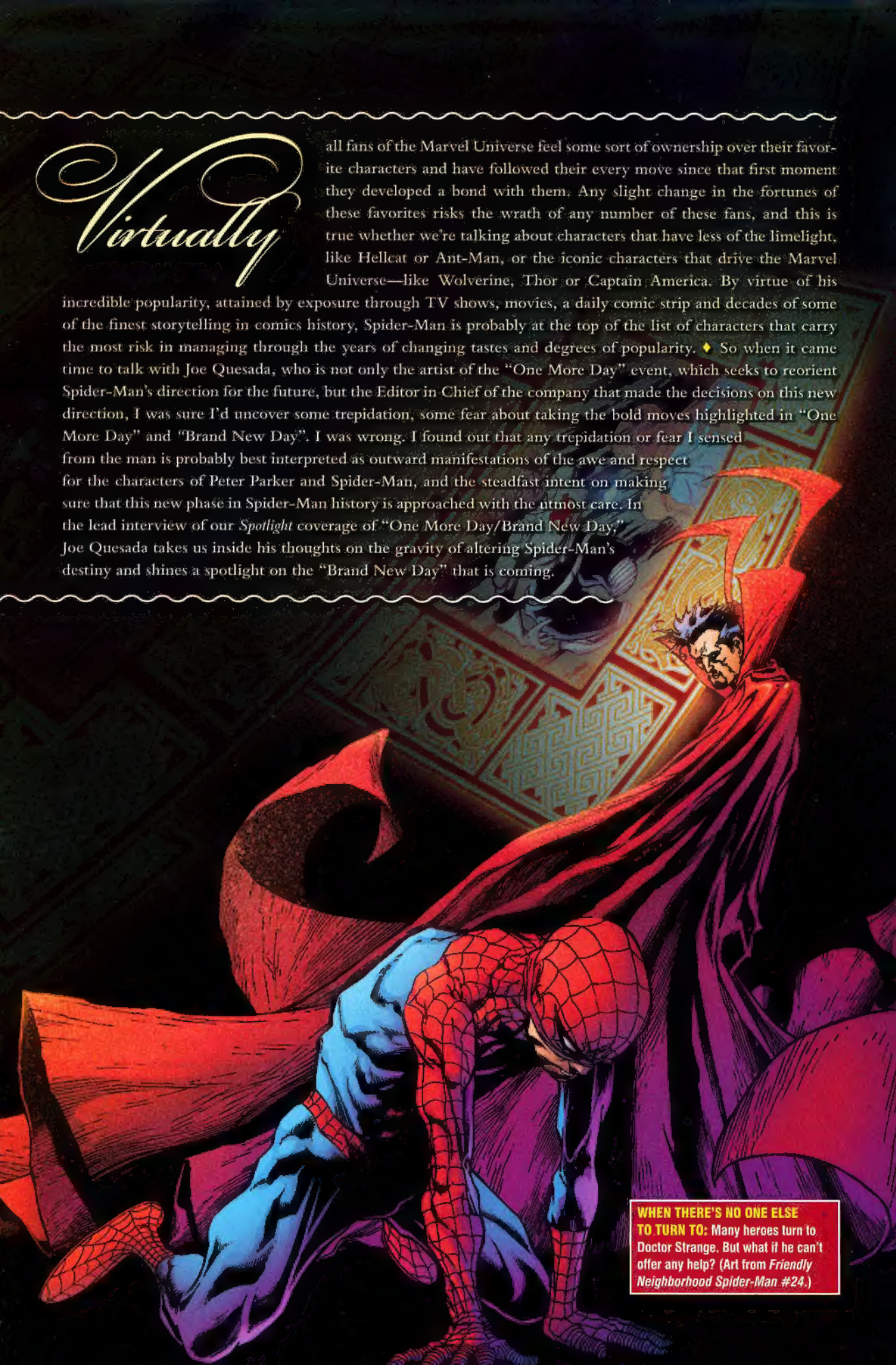
GENIES & BOTTLES

ONE MORE DAY FOR SPIDER-MAN

Artist and Editor in Chief JOE QUESADA Speaks About The Future Of Spider-Man

BY JOHN RHETT THOMAS

Virtually all fans of the Marvel Universe feel some sort of ownership over their favorite characters and have followed their every move since that first moment they developed a bond with them. Any slight change in the fortunes of these favorites risks the wrath of any number of these fans, and this is true whether we're talking about characters that have less of the limelight, like Hellcat or Ant-Man, or the iconic characters that drive the Marvel Universe—like Wolverine, Thor or Captain America. By virtue of his incredible popularity, attained by exposure through TV shows, movies, a daily comic strip and decades of some of the finest storytelling in comics history, Spider-Man is probably at the top of the list of characters that carry the most risk in managing through the years of changing tastes and degrees of popularity. ♦ So when it came time to talk with Joe Quesada, who is not only the artist of the "One More Day" event, which seeks to reorient Spider-Man's direction for the future, but the Editor in Chief of the company that made the decisions on this new direction, I was sure I'd uncover some trepidation, some fear about taking the bold moves highlighted in "One More Day" and "Brand New Day". I was wrong. I found out that any trepidation or fear I sensed from the man is probably best interpreted as outward manifestations of the awe and respect for the characters of Peter Parker and Spider-Man, and the steadfast intent on making sure that this new phase in Spider-Man history is approached with the utmost care. In the lead interview of our *Spotlight* coverage of "One More Day/Brand New Day," Joe Quesada takes us inside his thoughts on the gravity of altering Spider-Man's destiny and shines a spotlight on the "Brand New Day" that is coming.



WHEN THERE'S NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO: Many heroes turn to Doctor Strange. But what if he can't offer any help? (Art from *Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man #24.*)

SPOTLIGHT: Your available time outside of being Marvel's editor in chief is very limited, which means you can only choose a few projects to do as an artist. So why choose this one over other worthy projects?

JOE: I just felt very close to this story. This was a project I really wanted to do, I really *could* do, I really *needed* to do, and something I hoped I could really knock out of the park. Another reason why I wanted to do this was that I've been talking about this for some time now, so I needed to put my money where my mouth is! It's my decision, though obviously we work as a company and we agree as a company, but I believe if anyone should come under fire it should be me.

SPOTLIGHT: Spider-Man is the cornerstone character in the Marvel corporate structure: so much begins and ends with Spider-Man, so there must be a really tremendous weight on his caretakers to make sure this goes well. The ramifications of "One More Day" are obviously something you believe in, you've talked about it for so long and now it's finally come to fruition. Can you share with us the weight upon you to do this and get it right?

JOE: Well, I don't know if "weight" is the right word for it, but I do feel a sense of responsibility for it. The reason Marvel has hired me to be editor in chief is to be a caretaker to these characters and do what's best for these characters. This has nothing to do with my personal taste of things. Although I suspect it is in part my personal vision (those who hired me) want as well, especially if that vision adds up to better comics, better sales, etc., etc.

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HAPPENS WHEN HE PUTS ON THE SUIT IS

But I've always felt, along with many other people in the comics industry—editors, editors in chief, past and present—that this is something that needed to be done; we just needed to find the right way to do it. To find a methodology that really worked, and once we came upon that methodology I felt that we needed to get on it and fix these elements of Spider-Man that could really be improved on.

SPOTLIGHT: It sounds to me that you are confident that what you are doing is definitely going to be received well, at least well enough to merit doing it in the first place. And that sort of ameliorates any trepidation you might have.

JOE: Well, yeah, let's be honest: We don't go into any decision here thinking it's going to fail, or else why are we doing it? This is not about ego or anything. What it's about is the longevity of the character, and it makes sense in my world that this is something that is needed for better Spider-Man stories. How will it be received? I don't know. I speculate that anything with a radical change will be received with shock and trepidation and that's okay - that's what fans do, and I've grown accustomed to it.

SHOWDOWN WITH STARK: The steep breakdown of friendship between Peter and Tony Stark has its culmination in *Amazing Spider-Man #544.*

There has never been a single, significant moment here at Marvel—or a single, significant moment in comic books overall - that the status quo has ever stayed the same, or people weren't doing something for the betterment of the books or the characters. So with all that in mind, I can't tell you if the fans are immediately going to embrace this. But I do think, like a lot of things that we've done in these past few years, that given a year, a month, or however long, once we actually settle into the type of stories we really want to tell, I think it's going to gel with the readers.

SPOTLIGHT: Now let's talk about the character. So much has been made about who Spider-Man is now, and over the years you've been indicating that maybe he's not really where he needs to be to tell the most effective stories. So who is Peter Parker right now?

JOE: Peter Parker to me is the everyday shlub of the Marvel Universe. He is our everyman, he's you, he's me. I think the beauty of Spider-Man is that everyone—*everyone*—can relate to his character, everyone sees a little bit of themselves in Spider-Man. And that's part of the character's allure, and I think when we step away from that it shouldn't be surprising to us that the character doesn't resonate as much with fans. So we have had an incredible J. Michael Straczynski run, and we're going to continue to have great runs after Joe leaves, but I think getting back to the status quo, to Peter's roots, is a very important thing for the characters for the next twenty to thirty years.

SPOTLIGHT: It's funny, Spider-Man is the most important character in the Marvel stable, but his condition as a character is vitally dependent on two different identities. He really

THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE ... OUT PETER PARKER, AND REALLY WHAT JUST GRAVY." – ARTIST/EDITOR IN CHIEF JOE QUESADA

defines what it means to be a super hero with an alter ego, with all the frailties and the faults that humans have. We talk about Peter Parker, but how substantially will Spider-Man—the hero, the costumed identity—be affected as "One More Day" evolves into "Brand New Day"?

JOE: I would argue that Peter Parker is the most important person in the mix of Spider-Man. It's all really about Peter Parker, and really what happens when he puts on the suit is just gravy, so I think when you see the changes that will occur in Peter in "Brand New Day", you will know how it affects Spider-Man, as there is additional and added soap opera to his life. There will be new and interesting problems, new and interesting people, a brand new cast, a whole new mix of characters and villains for us to play with. It's really going to open the floodgates of creativity for Spider-Man. I think the fans are truly going to get a kick out of what we're going to do.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the elements of the book that I enjoyed while reading over the last few years has been the relationship Peter has developed with Tony Stark. I thought it was

a really novel and interesting relationship to build up. Was the interaction between Iron Man and Spider-Man in the first chapter of "One More Day" (*ASM #544*) pretty much the resolution of that arc between the two characters?

JOE: Well, probably for now it will be. There is more stuff happening with respect to Iron Man in his world, and where that character is going, that I think it will cause him to have continual run-ins with other members of his super-hero fraternity, but I think for the time being that's going to be it for Peter and Iron Man.

about for so long now finally seemed feasible, like something that could actually happen?

JOE: Yeah, I have to tell you, a lot of our writers helped come up with that and it was like striking gold. It was one of those moments when we were like, "Oh, my God, we've got it!" And it was also so funny because it was so simple. It's just the same feeling we had about the *Civil War*, when we were trying to bring back the edginess that we had lost over the last forty years. So, again, one thing fit into the other, which fit into the other. We

"IT'S VERY EASY TO UN-MARRY A CHARA THING...YOU JUST DO A HUGE UNIVER SAY A FEW EVENTS IN HISTORY DIDN'T H REALLY NOT THE WAY WE DO IT HERE AT

SPOTLIGHT: You mention JMS' run earlier: what are your impressions of him as lead Spidey-writer over the past few years, and now dealing with him directly in this arc? What do you think he feels right now as he is getting ready to leave a title that has obviously meant a lot to him?

JOE: I don't know how he actually feels, but I can certainly tell you: I don't think Joe realizes the impact he's had on this character after so many years. His run has been historic in length and quality. That many wonderful Spider-Man stories after so long, that kind of consistency for so long is pretty remarkable, and that's something for which I will always be appreciative to Joe. He always gave us his "A" game. Not every story is going to be met with critical success, but on a day-to-day basis what he did for the character is truly remarkable. So I can't speak for what he's feeling but I sure hope he's proud of it, because man, we sure are.

SPOTLIGHT: When you spoke about looking for the methodology in which to tell new Spider-Man stories, you mentioned you were looking for the right opportunity to take the plunge. At what point did you sense that the events of *Civil War* were serving up the kind of pitch that you could hit over the fence?

JOE: It's very easy to un-marry a character, or fix something like that: you just do a huge universal retcon, and say a few events in history didn't happen. But that's really not the way we do it here at Marvel. That's the reason why over the years, while other editors in chief have tried to find a way to get to this point, the idea just wasn't there. Then one day we came upon the idea, and it was this moment that allowed us to do the unmasking of Peter Parker, because we knew that one idea would run into the other and make the other idea possible, so it was just finding a way to make the other idea possible. Once we found the way to do it, we asked ourselves, "Okay, now where do we put it on the time line?" And away we went.

SPOTLIGHT: How did you feel when you stumbled upon that moment and you realized that the stuff you've been talking

were just very fortunate that these things came along at the time that they did.

SPOTLIGHT: How important was getting Steve Wacker on board as editor to the success of "Brand New Day"? From a structural standpoint, it would seem like he couldn't be overvalued because of his experience with *52* and getting that rolling. What can you say about him, and what he brings to the "Brand New Day" experience?

JOE: Steve is made for this job; he has had his baptism of fire. We had planned out "Brand New Day" before Steve was hired on here, but we didn't ask to bring to him Marvel based upon this idea. It just sort of fit in and we were all like, "Hey, wait a minute...." It was just the stars aligning for lack of a better word.

SPOTLIGHT: Who stood with you when you were conceptualizing what "Brand New Day" would mean to Spider-Man?

JOE: For "One More Day" it was basically the guys who had been on big creative retreats with us. You end up with a list of guys and a huge e-mail chain, which started one day talking about Spider-Man and then evolved into a two week long email chain of ideas being thrown around about "One More Day," with ideas about how it would work. With respect to "Brand New Day," that's really the writers group, the guys who were writing the book plus a few others, we all sat in a room and started batting about what to do with Spider-Man and what to do to make it fun again, and away we went.

SPOTLIGHT: You had the Spider-Man book that came out on Free Comic Book Day back in the spring, well before anything about "One More Day" or "Brand New Day" had hit the grapevine. You must have felt very mischievous when that book came out: by all appearances it was a stand-alone, "What If?" type of Spider-Man story, but there was something going on underneath the surface, wasn't there? A sort of "Brand New Day" preview?

ONE MORE DAY COMES TO A CLOSE: Joe Quesada and his team have designed "One More Day" as the endpoint from which a new beginning starts, sending Spidey webswinging toward a "Brand New Day".

JOE: Absolutely, that's just what we were doing. That was the fun part. Phil Jimenez was giggling all the way to the bank with that one. He knew what we were doing as well.

SPOTLIGHT: What was the feedback you got from people who may not have known what was at stake with that story? Did you get any positive feedback, any negative feedback?

JOE: No negative feedback; it was all positive. I mean, most people didn't know what they had, but a few fans were guessing and they'd say, "Hey, wait a minute, what's going on here?"

SPOTLIGHT: What's great is it really drives home the fact that you guys aren't giving up on Mary Jane. I think a lot of people assume that just because the status quo in Spider-Man's life is changing and they think the marriage will be a part of that change, she is apparently still involved in a certain way of his life.

JOE: Absolutely. There was no reason to get rid of Mary Jane. She is a wonderful character. Part of "Brand New Day" and "One More Day" is our answer to the fact that we acknowledge that over the course of many, many years, and many, many Spider-Man stories, and many, many Spider-Man writers, a lot of damage has been done to the cast in the sense that we've had many great characters who eventually were lost to character death, or whatever other pitfalls, but those things happen in the course of the years of storytelling. So we wanted to make sure we didn't make those mistakes again in a rushed, hasty fashion. We knew that Mary Jane was a great character regardless of how involved she is in Peter's life or not - there was no reason to kill her off, and that would really just defeat the purpose of what we were trying to do.

SPOTLIGHT: On the eve of its introduction, can you sum up your feelings about how "Brand New Day" is shaping up? Looking at the way the Spider-Man office has set this up, they've pieced together some very interesting creative teams to deliver these thrice monthly story lines. So wearing your editor in chief hat, but also as a fan of good Spider-Man stories, what kind of a job do you think they're doing?

JOE: I think they're doing an incredible job. I think that my favorite moment came when we were in the writers room and we were playing around with the stories and there was someone there who was not a writer. They turned to me after the first day of coming up with story concepts and said, "You know what? I have to be honest with you. I wasn't a believer in un-marrying Peter and Mary Jane. I didn't grow up in that golden age of Spider-Man, but now sitting here and listening to all those stories you all are coming up with, now I understand what you're talking about. I completely get it." And that was really kind of cool, to get that kind of feedback from someone who was not a believer, and I really suspect that the fans will have the same feeling we get when we're sitting here coming up with ideas in the writers room.

By now, "One More Day" is complete and in the record books, and now we turn things over to the "Brand New Day" crew for more great Spidey stories! Thanks to Joe for taking the time to take us inside his thinking about "One More Day"!

ONE MORE DAY, SIX AMAZING YEARS:

A SPIDER-MAN STORYTELLER

WRITER J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI LOWERS THE CURTAIN ON HIS CAREER AS SPIDER-MAN'S CHIEF SCRIBE. By Chris Arrant

Over the course of six years and seventy-six issues, J. Michael Straczynski has charted a bold course for Peter Parker, his super-heroic alter ego Spider-Man, and his extended family. In the pages of *Amazing Spider-Man*, the New Jersey born writer has taken a title once slacking in sales back to its place as the flagship title of Marvel Comics. Affectionately called "JMS" by his fans, the writer has steered the title through the stormy seas of *House of M*, *Civil War* and his own trials such as *"Sins Past"* and *"The Other"* - and finally into the harrowing *One More Day*, which finds Peter pushing far past his limits to find a way to save the life of his dear Aunt May.

Not bad for someone who only had a couple years of comic writing credit when he started. But although the comics medium is fairly new to him, he's long been writing for television, movies and the stage – most notably by creating and writing TV's *Babylon* 5. But it was his tenure on *Amazing Spider-Man*

that made his name in the comics arena, and a great name it has made for him.

As his swan song is released in stores, it's high time to sit down with JMS to talk about *One More Day*: the ending, the beginning...and everything in between.

SPOTLIGHT: Let's jump right into it: We're knee-deep in the middle of Spider-Man's "*One More Day*" event, with you and Joe Quesada making your swan song an epic ordeal. How did this final story come together?

JMS: I'm trying to remember the exact time, but I can only dimly recall...it was at either a retreat or Philly Con that Joe first broached the idea of it. He knew that I was going to stop on Spidey at some point, and wanted this to be the end of the road for my run. He and Marvel editorial had specific ideas they wanted to address with the character, and wanted to be able to use this series to accomplish them.

SPOTLIGHT: In *Amazing Spider-Man* #544 we fully see the fragility of Aunt May's condition. With Aunt May being so central to Peter Parker's life, in some ways more vital than even Mary Jane, how does that affect his mental state?

JMS: He's certainly desperate, and determined, and more liable to make a reckless mistake that he might not make under other circumstances. He's running on adrenaline, he's on the wrong side of the law...he's screwed and he knows it.

SPOTLIGHT: Once Peter is faced with the reality that modern medicine can do nothing to help Aunt May, he begins to reach out to his super hero friends... first to Tony Stark. Spider-Man had developed quite a friendship with Tony prior to *Civil War*, only to become bitterly opposed to him with more than one altercation. Why was Tony first on Peter's list?

"He's certainly desperate, and determined, and more liable to make a reckless mistake that he might not make under other circumstances. He's running on adrenaline, he's on the wrong side of the law...he's screwed and he knows it."
— JMS on the state of Spider-Man in One More Day.

JMS: Tony was up first because Peter needed money for May, and Tony had it. He also knew that Tony was fond of May and might be able to get past the registration issue to be of aid, especially since to some extent May was injured because Peter listened to him and unmasked. I also wanted Tony to be the one to help out because though I've written him that way to editorial specs, I've

FRIENDS NOW FOES: One of the best aspects of JMS' tenure on *Amazing Spider-Man* was the emotional connection made between Peter and Tony Stark, a connection now tragically sundered by *Civil War*. (Art from *ASM* #544.)

never really bought into Tony as a bad guy. I liked Tony as the mentor figure, and writing that period where he and Peter were working together at Stark Tower was the part of him I enjoyed most.

SPOTLIGHT: At the end of *Amazing Spider-Man* #544, Spider-Man hints at going to Dr. Strange for help. With all Spider-Man's acquaintances, why is Stephen Strange on his list second only to Tony Stark?

JMS: Tony represents whatever science and money can do. Having exhausted science and money, the non-scientific remains. Hence Stephen.

SPOTLIGHT: In some ways, your entire run on *Amazing Spider-Man* has been building up to this arc. You've effectively put Peter at the end of his rope, placing him at the point where any normal person wouldn't have any options.

JMS: When we developed the story, there was nothing else one could really do other than put him in a corner emotionally, so yes on that score.

SPOTLIGHT: Let's step back from "One More Day" and look at the big picture – your run on *Amazing Spider-Man*. You started back in June 2001 with issue #471 – your first work with Marvel Comics. You were familiar with comic readers through your work on *Rising Stars* but still best known by your hit TV show *Babylon 5*. What was going through your mind?

JMS: I really saw it as what it became: a chance to work on a flagship character with whom I greatly identified as a kid who was also a big fan of the character growing up. Marvel was in desperate straits then, and needed something to boost the character from where he'd been at the time, selling something like 30,000 copies per month. Since I've been on the book, it's rarely dropped below triple that number, and that was my hope: to bring it up to the top tier again, where it belongs.

SPOTLIGHT: How did you and Marvel originally get on the same page and get you on *Amazing Spider-Man*?

JMS: On the one hand, it's their character, and I made it clear that I viewed it that way. I'm a hired gun. At the end of the day, I or any other writer moves on and you have to be sure not to damage

BLACK SOUL, BLACK SPIDER: Peter Parker's relentless mission to avenge his aunt is recounted in "*Back in Black*". (Art from *ASM* #541.)

the character beyond recall. On the other hand, I told them that I was going to try a lot of different things in order to bring up the character's profile, some of it probably controversial, and from time to time I'd probably fail. If they were cool with that, we'd proceed, and we did.

SPOTLIGHT: The first page of your first issue really sets the status quo of the time, with Peter living solo in NYC and without Mary Jane. They were separated during that time – how did you wrap your head around that, and did you have firm ideas for how you would proceed with their relationship?

JMS: I really wanted to get them together ASAP because I liked that dynamic, so that was one of the first things I told Marvel I wanted to do. I wanted to show a loving couple, not two people who just bicker and bite at each other over petty stuff, which is how a lot of writers view conflict.

SPOTLIGHT: Aunt May has always been an integral character to the Spider-Man family, but over the course of your run you've elevated her to being perhaps the most genuine character in comics. How did you approach writing Aunt May, and did you have any guidelines ingrained from the get-go?

JMS: I just tried to always visualize her as a real person of great inner strength, not a liability, not someone who was there just for the purpose of fainting and being cross and weak all the time. She raised Peter by herself; that requires inner strength. I wanted to validate and reinforce that.

SPOTLIGHT: You sent the fans reeling early on when Aunt May discovered that Peter was Spider-Man. Teased for ages, what made then the right time to do it? And how do you think it evolved Peter's relationship with May?

JMS: It's something I wanted to do and it just felt like the right time to do it. I wanted to send a message that those we love can bear our secrets without being killed by them, a message that I think a lot of people needed to hear, given the response and emails that followed. I think it matured his relationship with May and made them closer.

SPOTLIGHT: In the first issue, you move Peter into a new vocation – no longer a photographer, but a schoolteacher. What brought this on?

JMS: It just felt like the right thing to do, and I wanted to explore it more, but the overall shape

of the Marvel Universe kept shifting around and it became difficult to continue to play that thread out as planned. I just thought it could be a cool story element to have Peter giving back to kids like he used to be.

SPOTLIGHT: A bevy of new characters entered the Spider-Man mythos during your run: Ezekiel, Morlun, Shathra, Shade, a new Dr. Octopus, The Digger, Killshot, and Gabriel and Sarah Stacy. I think I've forgotten a few in there somewhere. Anyway.... Why'd you go this route instead of going straight to Spidey's all-too-familiar rogue's gallery?

JMS: Your last clause has the answer to that: we'd seen the rogue's gallery used so much that it just felt like it needed freshening. I don't think any of the characters I introduced are really worth keeping over the years; they were introduced for specific story purposes in terms of Peter's character. How many times can you have Spidey fight Electro (as much as I enjoy Electro) before it begins to parody itself? I figured, let's have some guest characters to cleanse the palate for a while before bringing back the original group.

SPOTLIGHT: Early on in your run, you introduced a new aspect to Spider-Man's origin – that of totems. The mysterious Ezekiel was the one that slowly unraveled the mystery to Peter, and it took Peter on a wild ride culminating with '*The Other*' crossover. Given that Spider-Man's origin is so ingrained in comic consciousness, did you have any apprehension at introducing this new element?

JMS: I always have apprehension when introducing something new. But as I told Marvel at the

"I wanted to send a message that those we love can bear our secrets without being killed by them, a message that I think a lot of people needed to hear..."

– JMS on Aunt May discovering the secret of Peter's dual life as Spider-Man

SPIDER-MAN VS. DIGGER: One of JMS's cool additions to Spidey's rogues gallery was featured in *ASM* #53.

beginning, I wanted to try some new things, some of which would work, while others wouldn't. The totem aspect came to me when I looked over his rogue's gallery and saw that something like 90% of them were other animal figures: Rhino, Doc Ock, the Vulture, Croc, the list goes on and on. There was an animal totem thing going on before I ever touched it, I was just the first guy to say "maybe there's a connection and a reason." But I always kept Peter skeptical about the whole thing.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the most poignant and popular issues of your run was the famous 'Black Issue', commemorating 9-11. Back during the time you said you wrote it in a blur of a couple hours, and John Romita, Jr. said he illustrated it in a similar haze. Looking back at it now, what are your thoughts on it?

JMS: I'm still very happy about it. (And for those who complained about it, Doctor Doom wasn't in the script I gave to Marvel, I just noted that there were a number of villains who were moved by the event, and Doom was one of those drawn, so I won't cop to that one.) It was a very different style of writing for me, and to this day I continue to get people coming up to me and thanking me for that issue, so I did something right for a change.

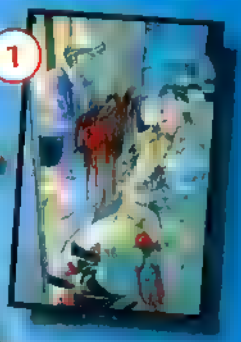
SPOTLIGHT: Peter got his share of good with the bad though, and one of Peter's highest moments was reuniting with his wife, Mary Jane. How did you approach this make-up for the Parkers?

JMS: I just tried to imagine how it'd go if I were in that position, then had Peter act smarter than me since I always screw these things up when I'm in that position.

SPOTLIGHT: One of the most controversial parts of your run on *Amazing Spider-Man* was the reveal that Gwen Stacy had a one-night stand with Norman Osborn – aka The Green Goblin – while she was dating Peter, and had twins that Peter didn't know about until recently. When the ideas that became this story starting coming to you, did you realize the fan upheaval it would cause – and how do you think it serves to color and broaden Spider-Man, and Gwen Stacy's effectiveness as characters?

JMS' TOP FIVE ISSUES FROM HIS *ASM* RUN

1 Aunt May discovers Spider-Man's identity



2 The big anniversary issue

3 The 9-11 issue

4 The climactic Morlun issue

The issue where MJ and Peter get back together finally

5

TOP FIVE THINGS JSM DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO DO

1 Do more with Peter teaching

Making Gwen's kids Peter's kids 2

Unmask Spidey in *ASM* instead of *Civil War* 3

Have him fight it out with Electro 4

Use the Black Cat 5

JMS: I didn't anticipate the whole madonna/whore complex that came out in a lot of people. I thought it showed strength for her to make a mistake, own up to it, have the kids, and come back to confront Norman and marry Peter. (And for those who kept saying "how could she do this with Spidey's enemy?", she didn't know he was Spidey's enemy.) But it didn't quite go down that way. The irony is that I had at first proposed making this a story about Gwen having Peter's kids, but Marvel vetoed the idea because it would make Peter feel too old, and at the last moment they suggested Norman as a way to shake things up, but "the fans'll love it." I kind of wanted to back away from the story at that point, but the solicitations were already going out with the first issue of the arc, and it was too late to do much about it but buy the ticket and take the ride.

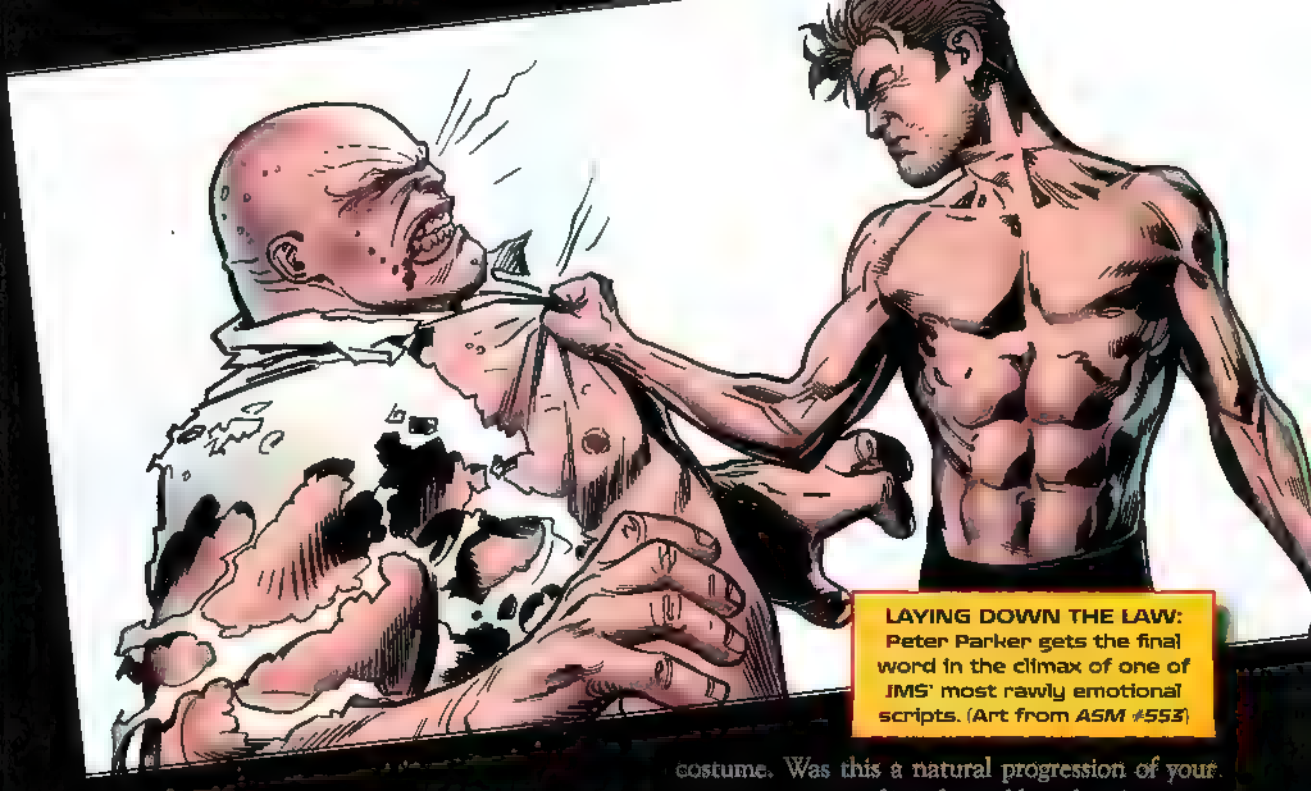
SPOTLIGHT: Spider-Man became more of a central figure in the tight-knit Marvel Universe as the war drums began beating for *Civil War*, joining the Avengers, having a camaraderie with Tony Stark (aka Iron Man), and moving his family into Avengers Headquarters. As the chief Spider-Man writer, how did this change Peter?

JMS: Peter was always a lone wolf, and joining the Avengers gave him a context, and people he could rely on and confide in and share techniques with, and I think that meant a lot to him.

SPOTLIGHT: Peter's friendship with Tony Stark grew rapidly, and despite its ultimate demise mid-way through *Civil War*, it was an interesting friendship. What do you think Tony and Peter's relationship was about, and how do you think Peter viewed Tony?

JMS: I think in many ways Tony was a father figure for Peter, in that they had a lot in common and there was a real friendship there. Which is why I liked writing that mentor-ish relationship and didn't much like turning it around later.

SPOTLIGHT: The Spider-Man unmasking during *Civil War* – we have to talk about it. Introduced in *Civil War*, it was in your title that the repercussions were felt. As a writer, how did this change for Peter color your outlook on writing the title?



LAYING DOWN THE LAW: Peter Parker gets the final word in the climax of one of JMS' most rawly emotional scripts. (Art from *ASM #553*)

JMS: It was an editorial decision made at one of the retreats, and I had to work with it as best I could. It opened up a lot of story possibilities; I went to the mattress on a number of things in *Civil War*, but again, it's Marvel's character and they have the right and the purview to make decisions about the fate of their characters, that's not really my call.

SPOTLIGHT: Changing gears to *"The Other"* storyline, it saw you working in tandem with the other Spider-Man creative teams and titles to culminate the *"Totem"* story first introduced in your inaugural June 2001 issue. Peter died, and sort-of evolved in a cocoon to a next stage of life. This new Peter Parker, how is he different from the one from before?

JMS: I was never really very happy with how *"The Other"* was handled, and Marvel has fessed up to some problems in coordinating the thing. I felt it was kind of disconnected and lost its focus through diverse writers and elements being put in by one writer that writer B didn't know about. I wanted to use the moment to reset Peter physically and to give him a new lease on life.

SPOTLIGHT: Shortly after *"The Other"*, you barreled into *"Back In Black"* which saw an attempt on Peter's life tragically hit Aunt May instead, leaving her on death's door and Peter on the brink. This led to the return of the darker "Black" costume. Was this a natural progression of your arc, or was some of it informed by others?

JMS: I'd wanted, and had always planned, to go right from the issue where Aunt May is shot into *"One More Day"*, which if you look carefully at those two issues, they fold right into one another.

SPOTLIGHT: Although your final issue isn't out yet, you've surely turned in your script months ago. How does it feel to be over?

JMS: It feels good on one level, having done the book for this long, and having achieved some good things with it. It's odd not to be writing it, but that's to be expected...like when your tongue keeps going over a tooth that's just been pulled and it's not there anymore.

SPOTLIGHT: Was it a tough decision to leave *Amazing Spider-Man?*

JMS: Not really. If I stayed much longer, I think I would've begun to suck. ("Too late," some might say.)

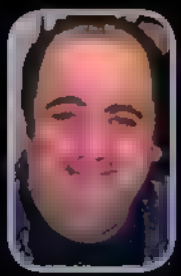
Thanks, JMS, for taking the time to recount your tenure on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. *The entire run of JMS's Spidey is available in collected edition hardcovers and TPBs. JMS newest title is the sensational revival of a certain Norse God of Thunder in the pages of* THOR. *And in 2008, he will premiere the new series* THE TWELVE, *featuring a cast of Golden Age Timely heroes.*

BRAND NEW DAY: TEAM ONE

Dan Slott • Steve McNiven

Amazing Spider-Man #546-548

by Dugan Trodglen



Writer Dan Slott

Spider-Man: Brand New Day kicks off with the dream team of writer Dan Slott and artist Steve McNiven. Despite only a few years in the business, Steve quickly rose to the top as an artist whose work is characterized by beauty, drama, and a smooth realism. This will be Steve's first interior art since the phenomenon that was *Civil War*. Everyone is eager to see how he handles his follow up and judging by the preview art we've seen, he's still in the habit of hitting home runs! Dan, meanwhile, has become a favorite with such titles as *She-Hulk* and *Avengers: Initiative*. A sense of humor and a wink at classic continuity has consistently marked his work, and his energetic imagination has filled his books with the kinds of characters and ideas that are sure to make Spider-Man fans thrilled. We already got a taste of Dan's talents on the Free Comic Book Day issue titled *Spider-Man: Swing Shift* with Phil Jimenez, a book which, unknown to fans at the time, previewed Spidey's "Brand New" world. As part of *Spotlight*'s comprehensive "Brand New Day" coverage, we talk to the writer who is first out of the gate in this new era in Spider-Man storytelling.

SPOTLIGHT: "With great power there must also come great responsibility." That has been the theme for *Amazing Spider-Man* since it began. That phrase also sums up the situation you and the other three writers find yourselves in. Is that responsibility palpable?

DAN: No. (*Poker-faced pause.*)

Of course! (*Laughter.*) There's gonna be a lot of eyes on this, and there's a lot of pressure that comes with that.

SPOTLIGHT: Despite rotating writers, the book is going to be telling the overall tale of Peter Parker's life, rather than being a series of unrelated stories. This is one of the reasons Marvel stopped dividing Spider-Man's adventures into three different books...

DAN: Which is a lot harder than it looks. This is not an easy thing that Marvel is trying to do. There is no alpha dog on this project, like in Ye Olde Days. You would have one writer on *Amazing* that would lead the flow. The other writers would have to take their cues from him. He says, "Okay, he's in the black suit now," and if you were the writer on *Spectacular*, or *Web*, or *Friendly Neighborhood*, you'd have to bend to what the *Amazing* guy did.

Well, we're all *Amazing* guys.

SPOTLIGHT: In every way!

DAN: Gee, thanks! But we really are all working together as this kind of hive-mind and there's a lot of work that goes into that. There's a lot of conference calls, a lot of e-mail chains. We go back and forth over many things. It's exciting. I especially like the sessions when we're all in the room together. We're planning out far-reaching things for Spidey, and what a thrill that is! (*Whispers.*) I can't give away any of it though!

SPOTLIGHT: I guess editor Steve Wacker is the MVP in all of this.

DAN: Oh, God yes. He's the guy making sure the train stays on the rails. This is huge. Three times a month! It's crazy! You're working and working and you write three issues. Normally that's three months worth of work, and then bang bang bang — right out of the gun.

SPOTLIGHT: They're already used up!

DAN: And we're on to the next thing. As you and I are talking, I have my first three Steve McNiven plots in the drawer. The first issue of my next multi-parter — someone's already currently drawing that. And this week, I'm turning in the first part of my next one after that! That's not going to come out

Everyone's going to keep his own voice. We're not getting shoved in a blender and homogenized.

until summer of next year. We're really busting our butts to make sure this all works.

SPOTLIGHT: How closely do you try to keep your voices consistent from writer to writer and how much of your individual styles are on display?

DAN: Everyone's going to keep his own voice. We're not getting shoved in a blender and homogenized. Everyone is going to be allowed to stand up and shine. But what's great is you have the talent of three other guys to fall back on. There's a scene in my second multi-parter and I was really happy with it. After Bob Gale read it, he pointed something out to me. He said, "You have a character who's doing x, y and z but you're not showing this. Why aren't you showing that? What if you played the scene this way?" He described it and I went, "Oh my God, that's so much better than what I had." I quickly rewrote the scene and now I look like a genius!

SPOTLIGHT: I'll be sure and mention that when I talk to him!

DAN: Tell him it's the scene with Screwball in the coffee shop. I look at that scene and say, "Wow, that's so much better now. It plays better for the character and makes a better visual, and that's from having someone in the room to bounce stuff off of. And the flipside, I see notes I've given the other writers being used so it's a big group effort.

SPOTLIGHT: So is Screwball a new villain?

DAN: This is another thing that's really fun. For the first few stories off the bat, we get to create all new Spider-Man villains. There was a feeling when we first started that it was far too easy to fall back on Doc Ock or the Vulture or whoever. And how many of those stories have we seen? So one of our goals was for everyone to create new villains, new characters. You're gonna see a lot of fun stuff returning, and a lot of stuff you haven't seen in the Spider-Man books for a while, but it's not at all a retro book. We're going to go in new directions as well.

SPOTLIGHT: When you are creating a villain are you trying to create a new legacy with that character? Is the villain's longevity something you strive for?

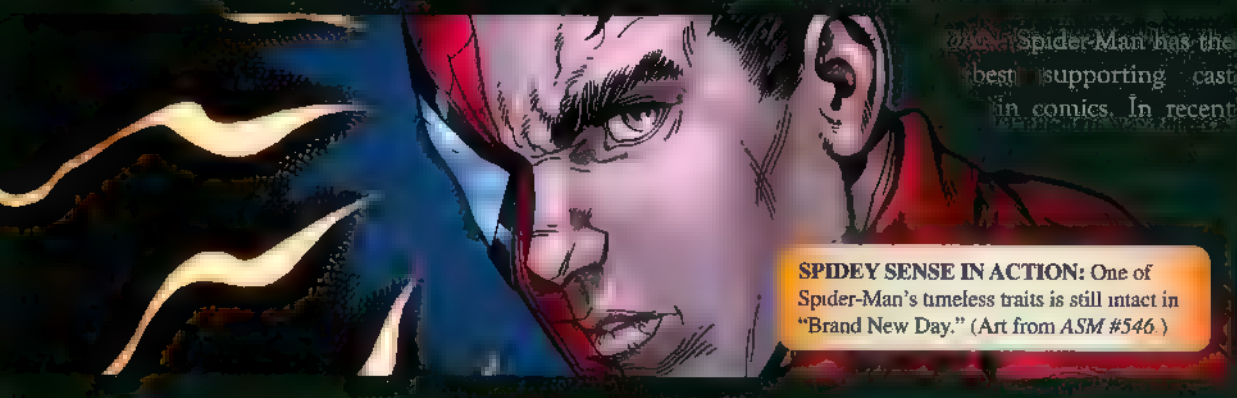
DAN: The first thing you owe yourself is that they make a good Heroclix.

SPOTLIGHT: (*Laughter*) Oh of course.

DAN: No, dude, it's a chance to create a Spider-Man villain for the ages. It's awesome. I'm having a blast with it. I'm so many issues in and I think I have three new villains. That said, by holding off on the classic villains, we're also making it so that when you finally do see Doc Ock or the Vulture, it's gonna be really special. I was just scribbling down ideas for how I'd want to use the classic villains when I finally do get to let them out of the box, and that's exciting too.

SPOTLIGHT: How are you approaching the supporting cast? New, old, returning?

DAN: Spider-Man has the best supporting cast in comics. In recent



SPIDEY SENSE IN ACTION: One of Spider-Man's timeless traits is still intact in "Brand New Day." (Art from *ASM #546*.)

years, it feels like Spider-Man's cast shrunk down to just Peter, Mary Jane and Aunt May. But there's so many great Spider-Man characters floating around. You're gonna see some old faces. Oh my God, we're using Betty Brant! But again, you're gonna see some new faces. Some guys are a secret. You're going to have to wait.

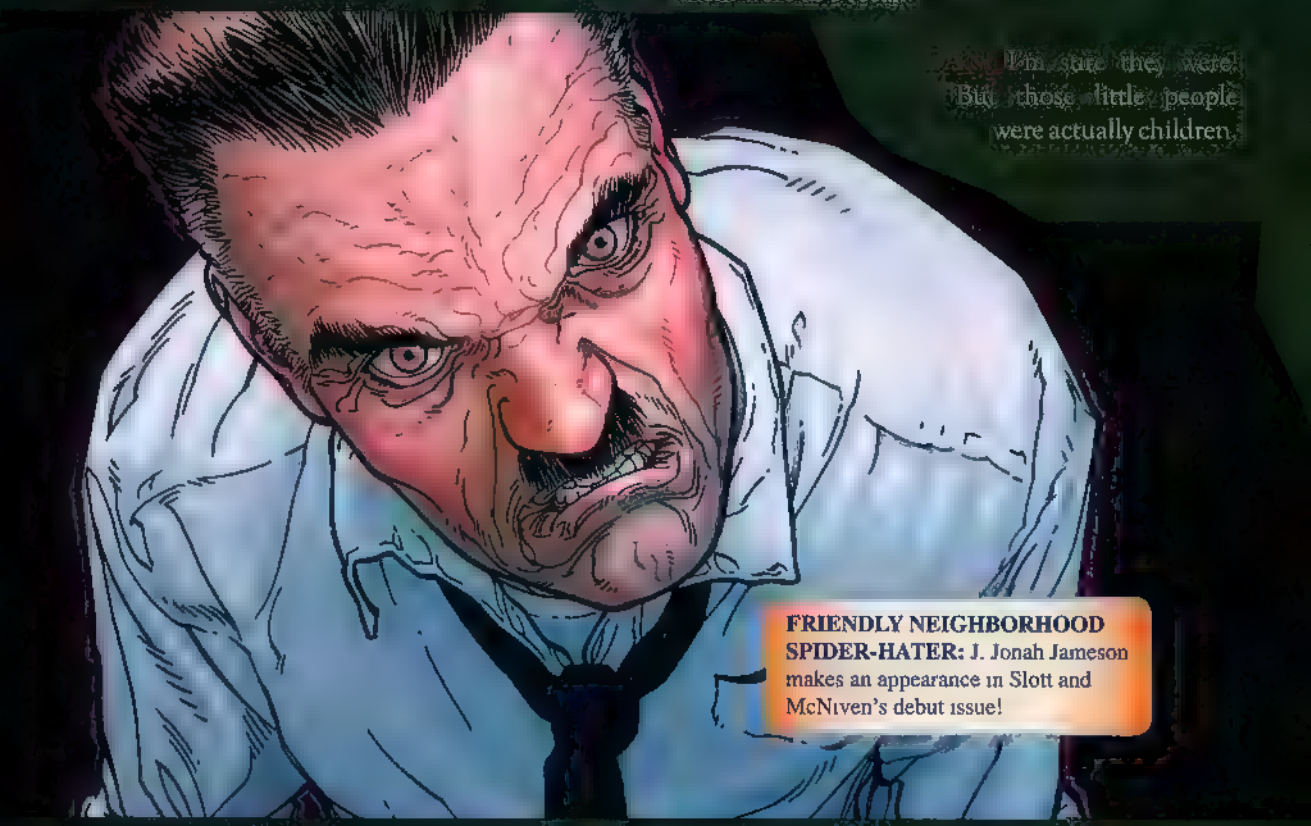
SPOTLIGHT: One new character in particular appeared in the Free Comic Book Day issue (*Spider-Man: Swing Shift*) you did with Phil Jimenez. That was Jackpot.

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of the Free Comic Book Day issue, that was an all-ages book. Even though it seems to take place in the "Brand New Day" world, it probably had a slightly different tone than *Amazing Spider-Man* will have.

DAN: Think back to Free Comic Book Day. When you were in that store waiting to get your comics, there were lots of little people in front of you. They weren't dwarves.

SPOTLIGHT: (*Laughter*) Actually, a couple of them were as I recall.

DAN: I'm sure they were. But those little people were actually children.



FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-HATER: J. Jonah Jameson makes an appearance in Slott and McNiven's debut issue!

DAN: I wish I could take credit for Jackpot. At one of our Spider-Man meetings, one of the people in the room was Marvel editor/writer C.B. Cebulski. He threw out the idea for Jackpot, what Jackpot is. I don't want to ruin it. Let me tell you: that idea is gold. You go to any message board and all they talk about is Jackpot. Jackpot. Jackpot. Jackpot.

SPOTLIGHT: The character did have a Dan Slott ring to it, I must say.

DAN: Everyone in the room fell in love with Jackpot. I was one of the only people in the room saying, "Maybe we shouldn't do Jackpot." The reason was that it seemed so much like a "me" idea. But you'll be seeing more of Jackpot in the second arc, by Marc Guggenheim.

So there was an endeavor to make it an all-ages book. When people start reading the first three parter of "Brand New Day" and the bodies start stacking up like cordwood in grizzly fashion, you'll say, "Okay, we're in a grittier Spider-Man world than in *Swing Shift*."

Another fun thing is that we're also going to release a director's cut of *Swing Shift* and you're gonna see that we had to make a lot of last minute changes to the script for reasons I can't talk about. For the director's cut, we get to put the original dialogue back in place. There's also going to be some features containing preview art and teases about what's coming up, and I believe they're going to also run the original *Swing Shift* plot and people will see it was originally going to be 17 pages. I'm

not currently working with the Overdrive character, but I'd like to revisit him. He has a shtick (not quite a super power) that we didn't get to see because of space. But *Swing Shift* is really a sneak peek of the "Brand New Day" world.

SPOTLIGHT: Is the story considered canon?

DAN: I consider it canon, especially with the original dialogue back in place in the director's cut. You'll meet all of the characters we introduced again. For example, there's a lot more to officer Vin Gonzales than meets the eye. He will become very important in Peter's life.

SPOTLIGHT: You have the exciting job of working with Steve McNiven on his first book since *Civil War*.

DAN: Oh, My God! Working with Steve — every page that comes in is just gorgeous. But I don't want to sell everybody else short either. Whenever anybody sends a page in, Steve Wacker forwards it to all of us and we all get to chime in like big fanboys. And everything I've seen come in has been some of the best artwork I've seen in my entire career. We have really lined up a murderer's row. It's amazi...

SPOTLIGHT: Don't say it!

DAN: I know! We keep wearing that word out in our meetings and e-mails! But going back to Steve McNiven: I consider it quite a coup to work with him on his first post-*Civil War* book. Every page is suitable for framing. I've run out of fridge magnets. They all go right from the printer to the fridge. I go to get a glass of water and say, "Aw... look at that!"

SPOTLIGHT: Living a dream.

DAN: Oh, absolutely. You're talking to the kid who had the lunchbox, the Pez dispenser; I still have my Corgi brand Spider-Van.

SPOTLIGHT: I get the impression that part of Spider-Man's "Brand New Day" is that there won't be such a cloud hanging over Peter's head as he's had the last few years in *Amazing Spider-Man*.

SPIDER-MAN Q&A

Artist Steve McNiven

WITH STEVE MCNIVEN

What is the most important detail to get right when it comes to drawing both Peter Parker and his Spider-Man alter ego?

Since you're talking about decades of visual continuity, you need to get the look in the ballpark while putting your own spin on the characters and then be consistent with it through the run. Sometimes that's kinda tough, especially when you don't have a lot of sketch time to solidify your look. You can get into the run and find a different approach to the character that you want to try but for the reader's sake it's better to stick to the plan (At least until you're done with the story arc.)

Who is your favorite all-time Spider-Man artist?

Far too many to choose a favorite. I've been looking at Gil Kane, Ross Andru, John Romita for the most part, although Michael Golden and Todd McFarlane get some love, too.

Has the unusual nature of the Amazing Spider-Man schedule affected your approach at all? It must be odd to know all of that work is going to come out in a single month!

Not much of a change in approach, though this will probably be the only time that I have three issues out in the same month (unless I grow

FREE SUNROOF! Spider-Man rips the lid off of things in Dan Slott's Free Comic Book Day issue of Spider-Man. (Art by Phil Jimenez.)

DAN: I'm not gonna tell you what to expect. You are gonna get some fun Spidey. Wait, strike that. We're not supposed to use the word "fun." You're gonna see Spidey humor, Spidey grit, and Spidey mystery and adventure. It'll be everything that makes Spider-Man so...I can't say it!

I wish there was more I could share. I'm so used to guarding what I say. We were at San Diego Comic-Con for the big reveal and I was in the Marvel booth doing some signings and all these people who had gotten wind of it were trying to talk to me about it. I kept saying, "Dude! We're in the Marvel booth! I can't talk about this!" But with *Swing Shift* I think most people assumed I would be doing *Amazing Spider-Man*. I was the easiest one to peg.

SPOTLIGHT: When *Swing Shift* came out, no one knew there were going to be four writers on a thrice-monthly book.

DAN: No. And man, working with Zeb, Marc and Bob...it's exciting. I still get a tingle thinking, "I just wrote an e-mail to Bob Gale!" But we all know this is the dream, so we're coming with our "A" game. I have not worked this hard in my life!

Oh wait! Did you hear that "ding" just now? I just received *Amazing Spider-Man #548* page 6! It's *beautiful*. It's a shot from below on the street looking up at Spider-Man shooting his web shooter and it goes "pttt" because he's just run out of web and the next page will be multiple shots of Spidey falling, bending, bouncing off of lamp posts because he's out of webs.

Oh great, I also just got an email from editor Tom Brevoort that says, "It's another weekday and look, your schedule hasn't changed any!"

SPOTLIGHT: Well, we should probably use that as our cue! Thanks a lot Dan!

DAN: Anytime!

Look for Dan and Steve to launch "Brand New Day" in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #546.

additional arms or pick up a meth habit.)

What classic Spider-Man villain are you itching to draw?

The Rhino would be fun, but I'd like a shot at the Molten Man. I'd love to see Morry color that guy!

New York City itself is a big cast member in Spider-Man books. What characteristic of the city do you want to bring out?

The vertical scale of things is an important factor, as is the architecture of the '30s and '40s. The modern stuff seems a bit cold and sterile to me. And cabs. Lots of cabs.

BRAND NEW DAY: TEAM TWO

Marc Guggenheim

Salvador Larroca

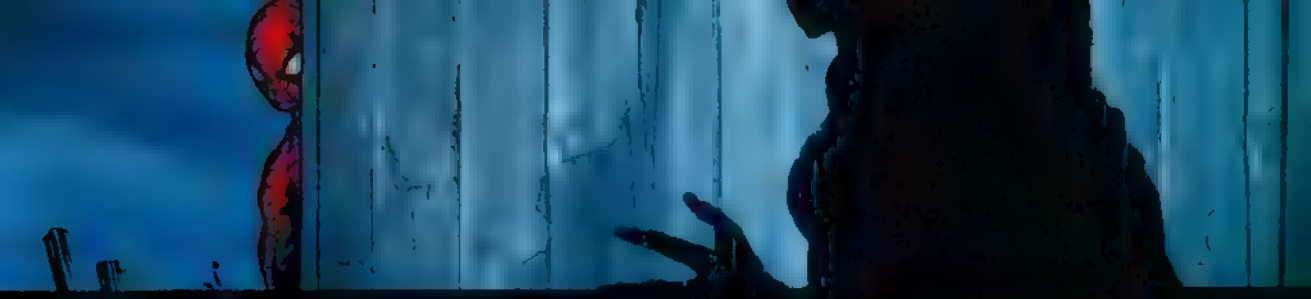
Amazing Spider-Man #549-551

by John Rhett Thomas

Writer Marc Guggenheim

Marc Guggenheim is a writer out in Hollywood. He has written for lots of popular TV shows... Great. Got that out of the way. He's also been a comic fan longer than many folks reading this article, and this combined with his writing acumen make for one sharp comic book writer. He launched his Marvel career with gusto in the Civil War issues of *Wolverine* (#42-49), which was no mean feat: picking up the title after consecutive milestone runs (Millar/Romita, Jr.'s "Enemy of the State" and the launch of Daniel Way's *Wolverine: Origins* concept) is one thing, starting it in the glare of the biggest comic event since the death of that super dude from Krypton is entirely another.

Readers of *Wolverine* had to have been impressed by the clean, precise, razor-sharp rendering of their favorite X-Man in the heat of a Marvel Universe meltdown: Marc's *Wolverine* was forged out of Adamantium, that's for sure. (Oh, and he's making a return engagement to the title in 2008!) Marvel's braintrust expect no less fan enthusiasm for Marc's turn on their other cornerstone character, Spider-Man — particularly when he's matched with one of Marvel's best working artists Salvador Larroca (*newuniversal* and more X-Men comics than you can shake a stick at!) Marc joined *Spotlight* to discuss his new run with Sal, life as a new Spidey writer,



and what it's like to flip the page on the calendar and find a Brand New Day shining through!

SPOTLIGHT: I've really enjoyed the comics you've been writing so far with *Wolverine* and *Blade* and now *Amazing Spider-Man*, your newest title. Just off the bat, where does Spider-Man fit in to your pantheon of favorite characters? Is he one guy that you've really been looking forward to writing one day?

MARC: Yeah! When I first hooked up with Marvel, they had asked me for a list of characters who I was most interested in writing. Spider-Man and Wolverine were at the top of the list. So getting a chance to write Spider-Man was sort of like, "Oooh! Now I get the chance to complete the tippy-top of my list!" It has been very satisfying.

SPOTLIGHT: You get Spider-Man and Wolverine right out of the box. How did that happen?

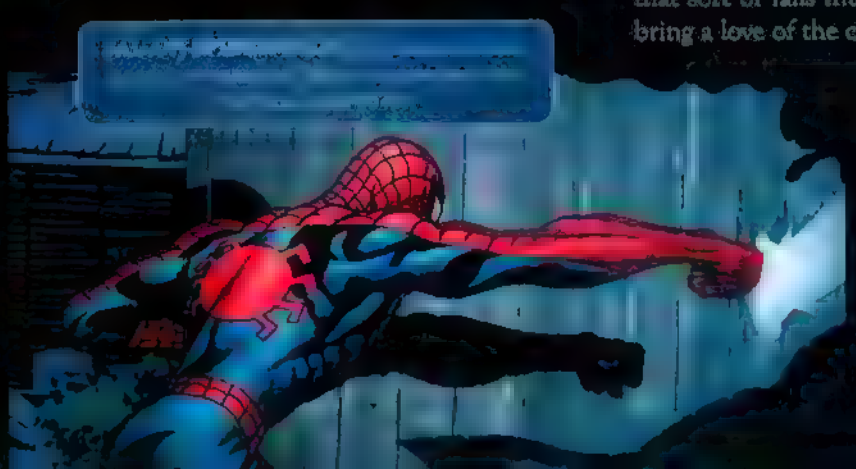
MARC: I got incredibly lucky. One of the reasons I went exclusive with Marvel is that it's just been a great series of opportunities for me. I have to say I got very, very lucky that my first published work for Marvel out of the gate was *Wolverine*. He's one of my favorite characters and I'm a long-time X-Men fan, and also it was such a high profile gig that it allows you to sort of build an audience with your work and reach a lot of readers. That gives you the name recognition that I think you need in order to get an assignment like Spider-Man. Which is like playing with, if not *the* biggest toy, certainly *one of* the biggest toys that Marvel has.

I still approach everything from a fans perspective and it's very weird to be sitting across the table breaking story with the writer of Back to the Future.

—writer Marc Guggenheim on working with fellow Brand New Day writer Bob Gale

SPOTLIGHT: Assuming Spider-Man goes well and you've been writing Wolverine (and will continue to do so), does that mean once you walk away from these, you're done? I mean, these are your Top Two! It's all downhill from here! (*Laughter.*)

MARC: By no means. You know, I'm a long-time Marvel fan and I've got a whole list of characters that are near and dear to my heart. Just for an example, *Blade* was not on that list. I think I was fairly up front when I took that gig that, even though I was aware of Blade and the character, I wasn't what you would call a Blade fan. And now I am. I definitely have a capacity for falling in love with a character as I'm writing him or her. So for me it's like finding that mix of who's a character that sort of falls into my writing groove and do I bring a love of the character with me to the book, or do I develop that over the course of working on the book. You know, at the end of the day, it's like, is there a good mesh? Sometimes that mesh comes before I take an assignment; sometimes it comes as a result of taking the assignment.



SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of Blade, Spider-Man was a character you got to write for the first time in *Blade*. As you know, there's been a lot going on with Spidey. How quickly did you get up to speed with what's going with his character to feel confident writing him in what is such a fast moving time for him and his world?

MARC: Well, I had already been following the book for years and years and years. I'm trying to remember when, I want to say there was a period when I *wasn't* reading Spider-Man...but that period was twenty years ago! The thing is, I've been reading it regularly since, I would say, Tom De Falco's run, way back when. [*That would be the mid-'80s, Spidey fans! – Ed.*]

SPOTLIGHT: So, there's absolutely no lack of confidence with you for understanding what's going on with Spider-Man, you're pretty much at home.

MARC: Very much so. Spider-Man is synonymous with my coming to Marvel as a reader. You know, when I was growing up and when I was really young, I didn't read Marvel Comics until I was ten. I was reading DC Comics and then I sort of discovered Marvel and my first entrée into Marvel, as it is for most people, was Spider-Man. Originally, I only knew Spider-Man as a character from the *Electric Company*, the children's television show. And actually as a kid I was terrified of Spider-Man. He was like this creepy, weird character that was so different from the bright, shiny heroes of the DC Universe.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, the *Electric Company* version of him was definitely very creepy.

MARC: It was weird, very odd. And for me, Spider-Man is all about the talking, his razor sharp wit and his banter. So I discovered Spider-Man, and in discovering Spider-Man, I discovered Marvel. And I started reading the book and, like I said, I guess there was some sort of period where I wasn't reading Spider-Man, but literally I've been reading since at the very least the Tom DeFalco era and I hung in there throughout all the low points like the "Clone Saga." The only thing I had to be brought up to speed on was, obviously, what was "One More Day" and what are the plans for "One More Day?" And you know it was exciting to come to the Spidey Summit and hear all of the plans for the first time.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, speaking of the Spidey Summit, did you have a hand in helping set up this new reality for Spider-Man?

MARC: Well, yes and no. The "One More Day" storyline was very much Joe Straczynski, from everything I understand. And sort of coming into "Brand New Day," that was the Spidey Summit and me, Zeb, Dan and Bob, as well as our fantastic editorial staff. We all had a hand in saying OK, this is the new status quo as the result of "One More Day"...now what?

SPIDEY SHOOT 'EM UP: Marc and Sal's Spider-Man evades bullets just like a spider can!

One of the cool things about "Brand New Day" is that there are brand new characters; there are reinvigorated, established characters; there's a plotline that is very multi-layered and complex – and all that stuff is stuff that came out of the summit and I'm sure that at least a few of my ideas ended up in the final plan.

SPOTLIGHT: So they're just handing you the keys to the car and saying, "Go take it out for a spin."

MARC: Yeah, I mean we have parental supervision.

FREE SUNROOF! Spider-Man rips the lid off of things in Dan Slott's Free Comic Book Day issue of Spider-Man. (Art by Phil Jimenez.)

We have Steve Wacker and Tom Brevoort as our editors and they've given us the keys to the car, but they've also painted the lines in the highway. And I have to say it's a very impressive thing. I've worked a lot in television and not every show runner has that deft hand where you can strike the balance between encouraging all sorts of artistic inspiration in your writers while at the same time providing a clear creative vision for them. And I think Tom and Steve have done a great job of letting us run rampant but at the same time helping us keep our eye on the ball.

[illegible]: Well one of the most interesting things about this era in Spider-Man is this new method where they're going to be consolidating all the different titles into three times monthly issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*. What do you think of this? Anything about this concept appeal to you, or on the flip side, is there anything about this concept that maybe has you a little nervous?

MARC: You know the second I heard it, my reaction was: it's about time. And that's my reaction as a fan. I've been reading comics my whole life, and I really can't help but approach these things as a fan first and as a writer second. And as a fan I've always wondered why Marvel never did this before. It actually makes a huge amount of sense, because while the spin-offs have always had really great runs, there's always this feeling that they're spin-offs and that those stories have to be somewhat told within the boundaries and limits set by the "flagship book." And as a result, it's hard as a reader to feel like you're reading the main Spider-Man. So this is such an elegant solution. And obviously the primary question in terms of doing it three times a month is, well how do you find a creative team who can produce three books a month? And the answer is, you create a really big creative team! You put four writers on it and a staple of really A-list rotating artists and you run it sort of like a TV show.

SPIDEY HITS THE JACKPOT: Who is this mysterious redhead and how does she fit into the life of our hero? Marc and Sal have a few answers!

SPOTLIGHT: Which you're very familiar with.

MARC: I'm a little familiar with, yes. (*Laughter.*)

SPOTLIGHT: As a screenwriter yourself, is it a seamless process for you to turn your attentions from writing for TV to writing for comics?

MARC: It wasn't initially. Initially I had a lot of trouble. I would sit down and I would face the blank page and I was like, "Oh my God, I don't know where to begin." Now, after doing it for a few years, it is pretty seamless, in many ways because it had to be. In order to juggle my TV writing with my comic book writing I need to be able to jump on whatever I'm working on whenever it needs to be worked on. I don't have a lot of time to spend switching my creative gears. I've got to be able to go from one thing to the next to the next in pretty rapid succession. So at this point I've been doing it for long enough that I can jump back and forth without too much mental strain.

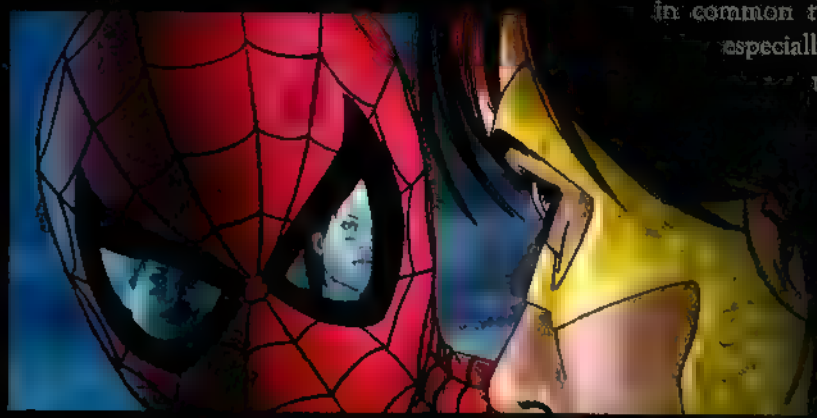
SPOTLIGHT: When analyzing the two different mediums, would you say they're closer to being cousin mediums, or sister mediums? Or are they pretty darn near the same type of medium when you get down to it? You can make this distinction probably better than anyone because you're in both fields.

MARC: You know, I've always felt that comic books and television had a lot more in common than most people thought. Unlike feature films; comic books and television both have continuing storylines; they both have shared universes. If you look at *Law and Order*, that's a shared universe. It's not just a series of spin-offs, it's a shared universe where everything that takes place all takes place in the same world.

Obviously there are differences in the mediums. The two mediums do different things well. Television is a very dialogue driven medium. Comic books for the longest time really weren't. I actually credit Brian Bendis for actually introducing television-style dialogue to comic books — making it permissible and creating an audience in comic books for very smart, sharp dialogue.

In my own writing, I try really hard in every individual issue I write to provide some talking heads and action at the same time so that there's always that mix. Television doesn't do action that well because it's very time and money intensive, whereas you don't have the budgetary constraints in comic books so you're only limited by the imagination and the artist.

So I would say in terms of the familial analogy, I would say they're like sister mediums more than cousins because I think they have more in common than what they have different, especially lately. If you look at television right now, you have *Heroes* and *Smallville* and *Reapers* and *Bionic Woman*, not to mention whatever's on the Sci-Fi Channel at any given moment. As technology has improved, television has been able to do



more super-hero-like stories and I think you're seeing a lot of that trend happen right now.

SPOTLIGHT: Tell me, do you have any fond feelings for Bob Gale, your writing partner on *Amazing Spider-Man*? He wrote some of the great movies from my youth.

MARC: And mine too. It's so weird. I mean, I love Bob. He's such a great writer, and he's such a funny guy. But, like I said, I still approach everything from a fan's perspective and it's very weird to be sitting across the table breaking story with the writer of *Back to the Future*. It's the best kind of weird. It's the kind of weird that, I mean, honestly, it's similarly weird for me to be writing

Spider-Man! I always feel like I'm living someone else's life. And I very much feel that way when I'm working with Bob.

SPOTLIGHT: How is writing *Amazing Spider-Man* fitting into your comic writing schedule? Is the innovation of writing three new issues every four months as part of a team something that is pretty easy to wedge into your schedule? Or is this something that may have more problems than we might think?

MARC: Well, I have to say it's harder, but it's not because of the three times a month thing. Some books are easier to write than others, and some books take me longer to write than others. But with *Amazing Spider-Man*, the average issue has been taking me about twice to three times as long to write as any issue of, let's say, *Wolverine*. And in large part that's because of the nature of the stories that we're telling. It's a very ambitious monster that we're trying to tackle because it's Spider-Man, but it's also an ensemble piece and you have this big supporting cast. It's self-contained stories that have a beginning, middle and end, but at the same time, how do you over-arch the plotline? And to get it right, it takes more time than other books. But it's a lot of fun. I'll sit down and be like, "I'm writing Spider-Man." I'm not writing a one-shot, I'm not writing an Annual. I'm writing *THE Amazing Spider-Man #550*. You know, it goes in the same comic book vault as the Stan Lee/Steve Ditko comics. That's really, really a very heady, mind-blowing experience for me.

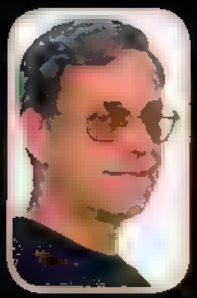
Marc has been blowing minds for readers at Marvel with Wolverine and Blade, and now he gets to prove his mettle on Amazing Spider-Man with this three-issue run from ASM #549-551 with artist Salvador Larroca!

BRAND NEW DAY: TEAM THREE

Bob Gale • Phil Jimenez

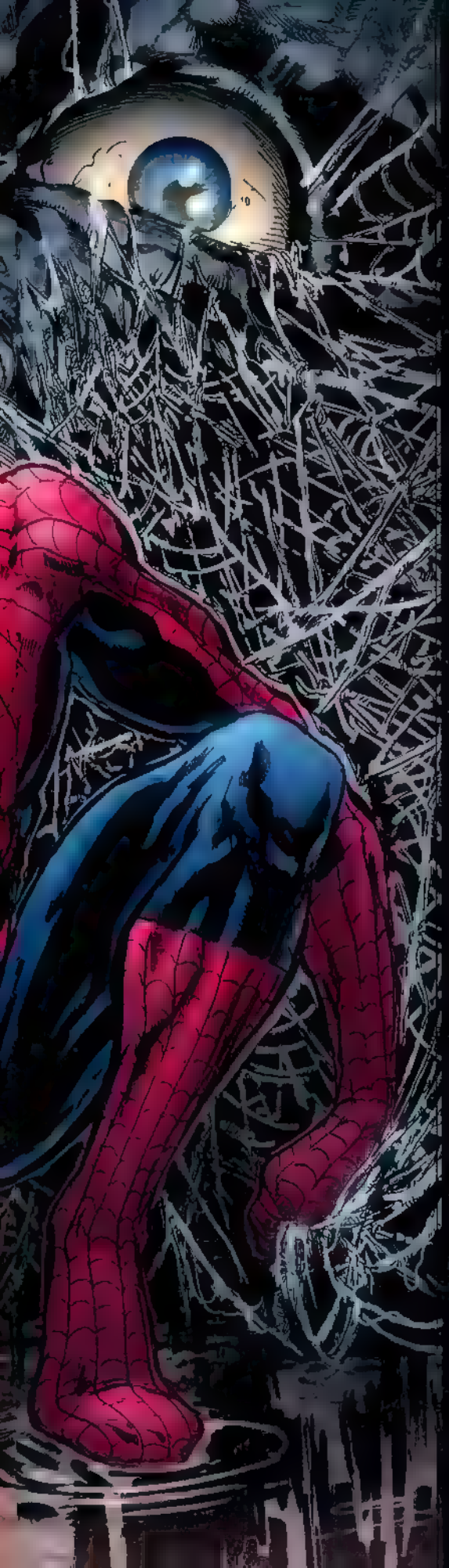
Amazing Spider-Man #552-554

by Dugan Trodglen



Writer Bob Gale

Month three of "Brand New Day" brings us a superstar penciller everyone suspected was involved with the event and a superstar writer nobody saw coming. When his stunning art graced the pages of *Spider-Man: Swing Shift* on Free Comic Book Day, many fans inferred that this was not the last we'd see of Phil Jimenez on Spider-Man. Turns out they were right! Phil has matured into one of the elite artists working in comics today, with his biggest splash being *Infinite Crisis* (for that other comics company up the street). Marvel loyalists will know him best for the beautiful work he did with Grant Morrison during an instant-classic *New X-Men* run. His hyper-detailed realism and energetic layouts have drawn comparisons to George Perez but Phil has easily established himself as a modern master in his own right. The most shocking name in the "Brand New Day" firmament has to be Bob Gale. While Bob does have comic book experience, most prominently a swell six-parter on *Daredevil*, he is mostly known for his work in Hollywood, especially for creating a franchise you may have heard of (*Back To The Future* anyone?). However, as we'll find out in our *Spotlight* interview with Bob, his comic book roots run deep, and he has strong opinions as to what makes a good story.



SPOTLIGHT: Although you have written for Marvel in the past, it's been a little while, and people may be unfamiliar with you, or familiar only with your movie work. Your previous work was for the Marvel Knights line when Joe Quesada was overseeing that. Is that what led to Marvel approaching you for this gig?

BOB: Let's go back to the beginning, because I know a lot of comics fans get suspicious when "movie guys" come in to work on comics because let's face it: the movies have screwed up a lot of good comics characters. My first published work in a Marvel comic goes back to *Tales of Suspense* #98 back in 1968.

SPOTLIGHT: Wow.

BOB: In the letter column.

SPOTLIGHT: (*Laughter*) You got me!

BOB: Ha! In fact, Steve Wacker pulled the issue out at the San Diego Comic-Con panel announcing us and read it in front of the audience and they got a huge kick out of it. So my fanboy beginnings go way, way back, so the fans can be a little less concerned there. I've been reading Marvel Comics since 1963. So there you go!

I met Joe after I wrote some Batman stories at DC. Some editor there at DC read an interview where I mentioned how my *Back To The Future 2* idea of a warped 1985 was inspired by classic DC "Imaginary Tales" and decided to ask me to help out with the "No Man's Land" story back in 1999. I went to New York, we worked out a yearlong storyline and I wrote the opening arc. Joe Quesada was blown away by it and called and said, "If you can write like this, why don't you write for us?" I asked what he had in mind and he said, "Well, we have Kevin Smith on *Daredevil* right now. What I'd love to do is get high-profile writers to come in and do runs on *Marvel Knights Daredevil*." I said I'd do it but that the only version of the character that I really get is the old Stan Lee/Gene Colan version, not the Frank Miller version. I think some fans were turned off by the fact that I wasn't doing the Frank Miller Daredevil. Joe was totally cool with it though. I love Frank Miller and I don't want to disparage him, but I always felt like when he took over *Daredevil* that what he really wanted to be doing was Batman and he kind of turned Daredevil into Batman. For me, a guy who calls himself Daredevil is a bit of a showboat. I think that's what Stan conceived, and that's how I wrote him. Joe was supposed to draw those issues but had to back out, so we got Phil Winslade. I had worked with Phil on the *Ant Man's Big Christmas* one-shot, and we had a lot of fun.

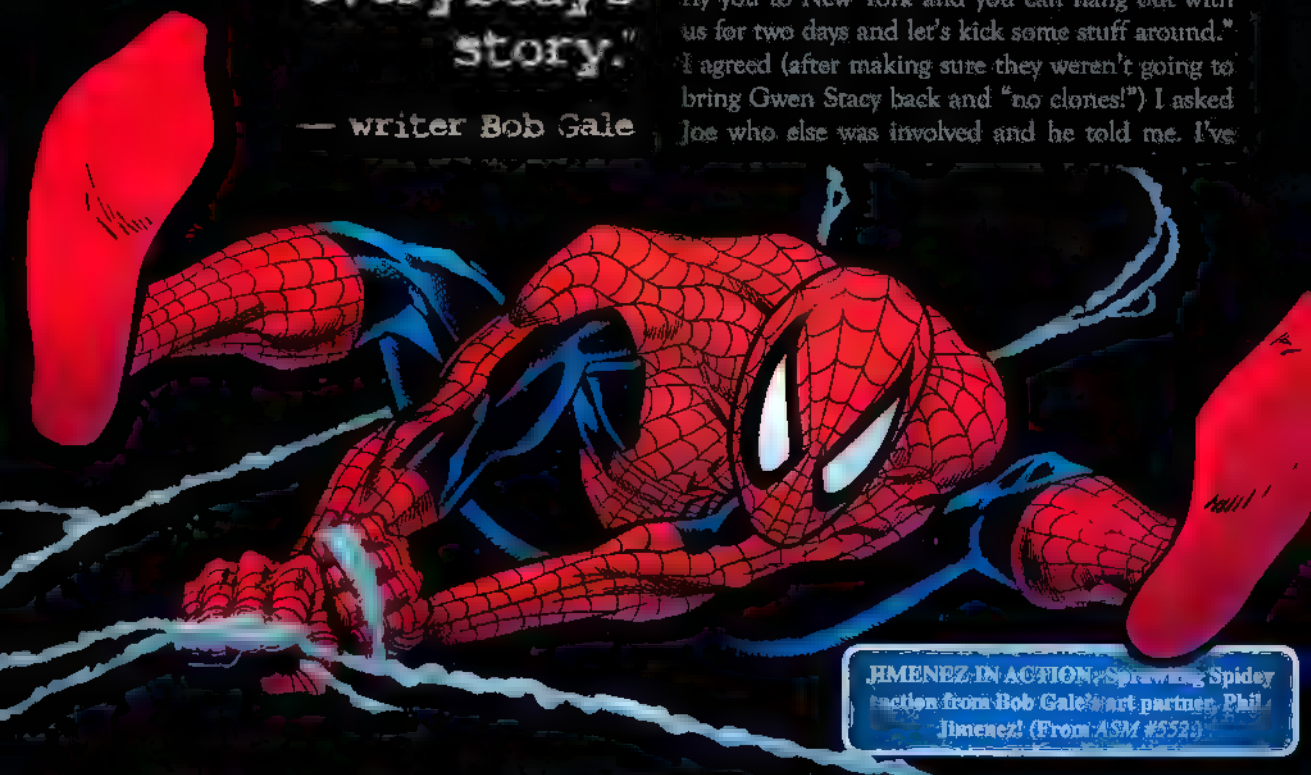
SPOTLIGHT: Those comics came out in 2000/2001. Had you kept up with Joe since your *Daredevil* run?

"The fact that there's no proprietary aspect to the writing helps in terms of the democracy of what we're doing. Everybody contributes to everybody's story."

— writer Bob Gale

SPOTLIGHT: What a small world! So Joe just called you up again recently about Spider-Man?

BOB: Yeah. I must say that there were some aspects of working on *Daredevil* that were not great. It was originally supposed to be eight issues and I wrote all eight, but the book got behind, it changed editors, and they decided to make it six issues, so I had to go back and cut it, and only got paid for six issues after having written the eight. That did not make me happy, as I think you can understand. I took a step back from comics and kept myself busy doing other stuff, but Joe called last December. He said, "I know this is really short notice, but I really think you can contribute to figuring out this new direction we're gonna take with Spider-Man. We'll fly you to New York and you can hang out with us for two days and let's kick some stuff around." I agreed (after making sure they weren't going to bring Gwen Stacy back and "no clones!") I asked Joe who else was involved and he told me. I've been a big fan of Dan Slott ever since I read the *Thing* series he did, and I love *She-Hulk*. So when he said Dan Slott, I said, "Okay. I understand that tone. That's a tone for Spider-Man I certainly like and can write."

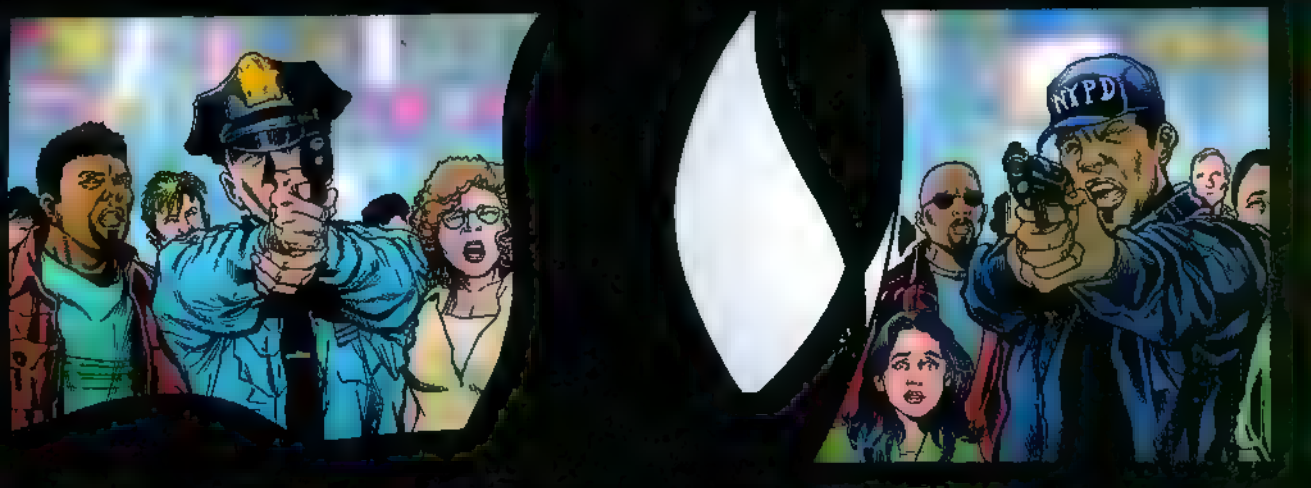


JIMENEZ IN ACTION: Sprawling Spidey action from Bob Gale's art partner, Phil Jimenez! (From *ASM* #552.)

BOB: Yeah, here and there. The last time I saw Joe was when he gave me a call while he was in California back in 2001 or so and he came by the editing room while I was working on my film *Interstate 60* (put it in your Netflix queue!). Actually, this is a cute story: there's a character in the movie that's an aspiring artist and there's some Spider-Man references early on in the film. In one scene he was to wear a Daffy Duck tie but Warner Brothers wouldn't let me use a Daffy image in an R-Rated movie! I talked to Joe about how I wanted a cartoon character on the guy's tie to show he's a fun kind of guy. We agreed I should use Spider-Man and he set that up. Not only that, but the star of the film is Cyclops himself, James Marsden!

SPOTLIGHT: I'm a big fan of those Slott series as well. The fact that you have read and enjoyed those books gives you credibility not only as a longtime lover of Marvel Comics, but as a contemporary fan as well. People should really be at ease that you know the current language of comics.

BOB: I know some of the current language. One



thing I'm burned out on are these maxi-series, crossover, mega-event things. Whenever those are going on I do the opposite. I don't read any of them. I'm burned out on them. I always was the guy in the room and still am the guy in the room who has to be brought up to speed on stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of modern trends, the standard nowadays is to write something in the range of six-issue story arcs. I noticed at least initially that you are all doing fairly short stories. Three-parters. You get in and get out for the next guy.

BOB: I'm not a fan of so-called "decompression", taking ten pages for a guy to walk into a room. So we are filling *Amazing Spider-Man* with story. It's great. There are so many things going on. The other writers are just as excited about getting all of these story elements going as I am. In fact we had a conference call on Friday and editors Tom Brevoort and Steve Wacker were saying, "Geez, guys, these issues are just gonna be jam packed and it'll be okay if every once in a while we had a two page spread of Spider-Man swinging along because we have none of that so far!" These comics are full of storytelling. My opening arc had more than we could fit so we juggled a few things around and will follow up on some of it later. It's really evocative of how back in the Lee/Romita days they'd leave some things hanging and a few months later they pick it up.

SPOTLIGHT: You have written a modest number of comics, but you've been an established storyteller for many more years than your writing partners. Have you noticed them looking to you for guidance as a storyteller?

BOB: Not really. It's an interesting dynamic. There is no lead writer, which is good. Someone may come up with something and everybody can say it's great or say, "Gee, I don't know about that." We all put our egos aside when we do this stuff. When I write a screenplay and I'm dealing with Marty McFly or Doc Brown, those are my characters and I know all about those guys. But Spider-Man belongs to everyone. He's not my character and he'll never be my character. He's not even Stan Lee's character anymore. He's been out there so long that everyone thinks they have a say in Spider-Man. So the fact that there's no proprietary aspect to the writing helps in terms of the democracy of what we're doing. Everybody contributes to everybody's story. Nobody gets their nose out of joint because we all want the same thing: to make the best Spider-Man comics we can make.

SPOTLIGHT: Dan did mention that he was very enthusiastic about a change you suggested for a scene featuring Screwball.

BOB: That's exactly what I'm talking about. It's just one panel and you won't think anything of it when you see it, but it's an example of our collaborative approach. As a screenwriter I'm used to collaborating

THE BAR WITH NO NAME: A favorite hangout for The Bookie and his super-villain pals. (From *ASM* #592.)

with a director, as a writer/director I collaborate with the director of photography or the production designer and editor. When you encourage it, you get a better result.

SPOTLIGHT: I read that you've lobbied for the return of the thought bubble and the narration boxes. Has that been a successful endeavor?

BOB: They're gonna be in mine, I'll tell you that! I tried to do that in my *Daredevil* book and Joe said, "No, we're not doing that these days." I asked about doing it in *Amazing Spider-Man* and he said, "Yeah, I think it's time to bring those things back."

I think there's been a movement in comics where people may take them a little too seriously and are trying to make movies on paper. These things — thought bubbles, narration boxes — are great tools that we only have in comics. The idea of putting in the little wisecrack footnotes helps capture a good tone. It lets the reader know we're here for entertainment.

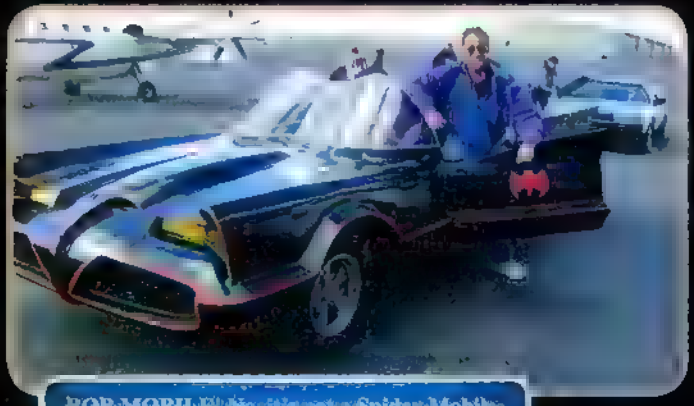
SPOTLIGHT: Will the events of "One More Day" serve as any part of the story of "Brand New Day" or is it a clean slate? Is Mephisto's involvement over?

BOB: We're proceeding under the idea that Peter is unaware of what happened in "One More Day." There is now this alternate history of what happened between Peter and Mary Jane, and what happened during *Civil War* and the unmasking is all erased from everyone's consciousness, including his own. There's going to be some geeks out there who try to fit all this into a particular time bubble and piece together what happened. They can waste their time doing that, but I say just read these books and enjoy them.

But for at least the first year, we're not going to go there with Mephisto or anything that relates to "One More Day."

SPOTLIGHT: Are you enjoying coming up with new Spidey villains?

BOB: Absolutely. We have a moratorium on old villains for a certain amount of time, which is great. People say, "Don't you want to write a Doctor Octopus story?" And I say, "I love Doc Ock but I don't need to write a Doc Ock story." There's already plenty of swell Doc Ock stories. If I can present a new villain then I can create a whole new type of story for Spider-Man we haven't seen. Plus we don't have to worry about people thinking, "Dr. Octopus would never do that," because my guy would! In *Swing Shift* you see that character, called the Bookie. He's a guy I thought of and he shows up in my three-parter and he'll be the focus of a two-parter I'm doing later on. That's a really interesting character.



BOB MOBILE: No, it's not a Spidey Mobile, but apparently Bob Gale was seen driving car inspired by some sort of bat creature.

and an idea I'm surprised nobody thought of before. There's all these fights in the Marvel Universe so somebody should be taking bets on them!

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of *Swing Shift*, illustrated by Phil Jimenez, you have the pleasure of having him as your partner on your opening story.

BOB: Steve Wacker did me a great service getting Phil onto this because Phil can put a lot of panels on the page and cover a lot of story. His version of Spider-Man is beautiful. But you're gonna love everything you see. McNiven is hitting it out of the park, Larocca's work is just incredible and everyone has been blown away seeing what Bachalo has come out with because we had no idea that his Spider-Man was going to be as cool looking as it is.

SPOTLIGHT: It really is a great team assembled, both artistically and in terms of writing.

BOB: One of the cool things about the dynamic and having this team of writers is knowing that it's not just the editors who are going to see this stuff but the other writers as well. That makes you work just a little harder. You want to do just a little bit better. I've talked to guys who worked at CrossGen and they all worked in that office. They had to do a page a day and they hung it on the door so everyone could walk down the hall and see everybody's work. Everyone said that made them all want to work a little bit harder because they wanted to impress everybody else. I think there's a little of that going on here and that's a good thing.

SPOTLIGHT: It's also like a relay race. You want to hand the baton to the next guy with as much momentum as possible.

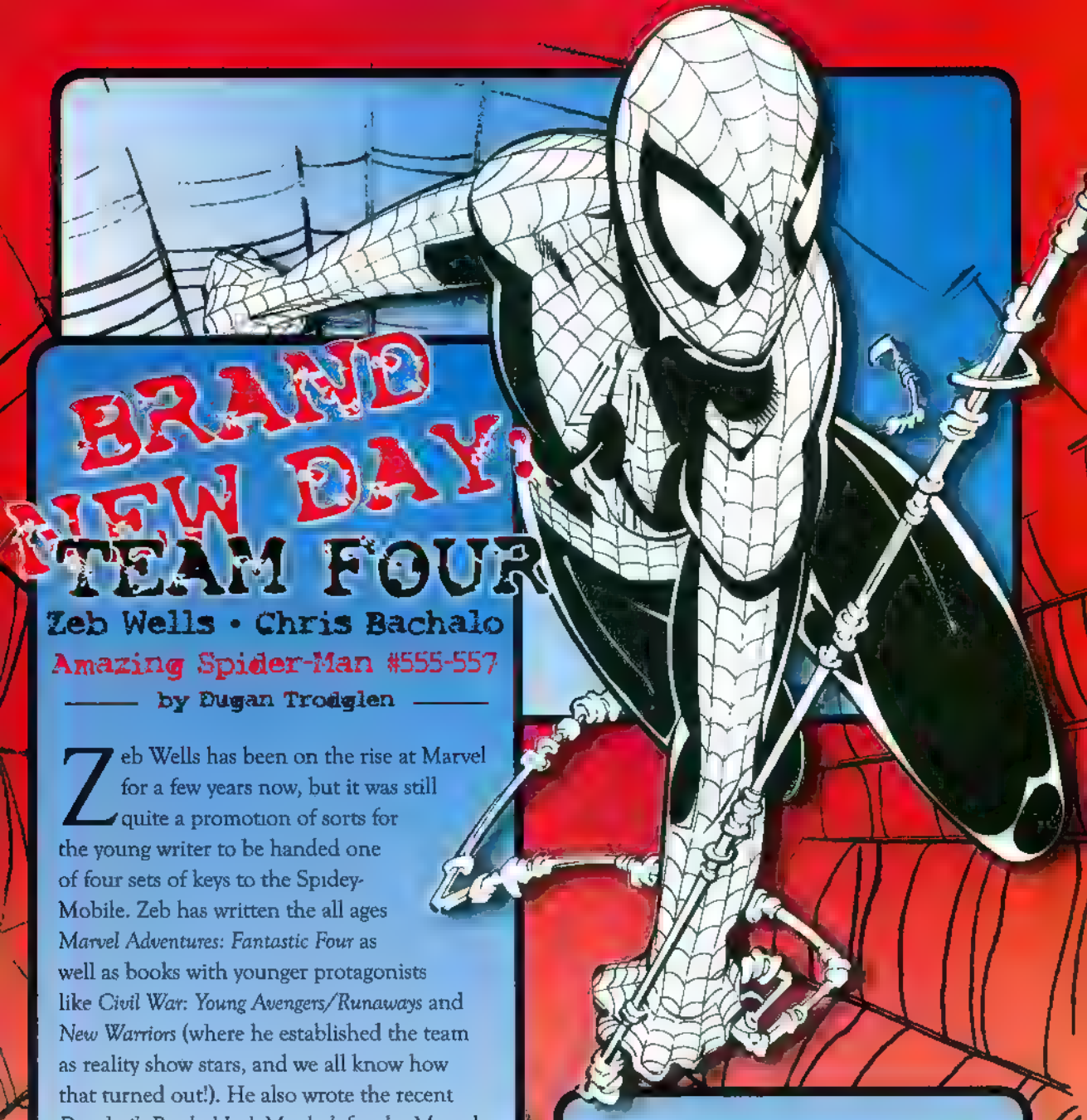
BOB: Yeah. And the other thing that's interesting is that we're all working a little bit out of continuity. We constantly have to talk to each other: "Are you gonna do this in your book or am I gonna do this in mine?" There's this spreadsheet we all have to refer to every once in a while. But we'll also get in a situation where we decide we need an extra issue of a story because there are too many unresolved things happening. I'll leave Peter Parker here, but the next guy needs Peter Parker there. We need to slide in an extra book to bridge that.

SPOTLIGHT: That sounds so exciting. I hope this is the way the book is run for a long time.

BOB: I hope the fans embrace it. Dan and I were just talking the other day about how no matter what we do there's going to be a lot of people out there that hate it because they are so invested in the Peter Parker/Mary Jane thing. As I said, Spider-Man belongs to everybody, which is why people get so upset. But there are also people that look forward to a breath of fresh air, and we're going to give it to them.

Thanks, Bob. It sounds like you're as excited to apply your talents to AMAZING SPIDER-MAN *as we are to read it! Look for Bob and Phil Jimenez' three issue run to take place in ASM #552-554.*

THE BOOKIE'S LAST BET!
One of Bob Gale's new villains, the Bookie, gets manhandled in *ASM* #552 (Art by Phil Jimenez).



BRAND NEW DAY: TEAM FOUR

Zeb Wells • Chris Bachalo

Amazing Spider-Man #555-557

by Dugan Trodglen

Zeb Wells has been on the rise at Marvel for a few years now, but it was still quite a promotion of sorts for the young writer to be handed one of four sets of keys to the Spidey-Mobile. Zeb has written the all ages *Marvel Adventures: Fantastic Four* as well as books with younger protagonists like *Civil War: Young Avengers/Runaways* and *New Warriors* (where he established the team as reality show stars, and we all know how that turned out!). He also wrote the recent *Daredevil: Battlin' Jack Murdock* for the Marvel Knights imprint, a brutal, decidedly non-youth-centric look at the troubled life of Daredevil's father. Now Marvel has decided he is ready to step up and handle arguably their most important book, *Amazing Spider-Man*, and his first story will be brought to life visually courtesy of the extraordinary art of Chris Bachalo. *Spotlight* talked to Zeb about his cool new job.

SPOTLIGHT: When the team of writers was announced, your name and Dan Slott's name jumped out as a pair that had something in common. Many of Dan's comics have been marked by a great sense of humor, and your books, from *New Warriors* to *Marvel Adventures Fantastic Four* have undoubtedly been a lot of fun. But apparently there is a moratorium on using the "f" word when describing the upcoming *Amazing Spider-Man* run. What is up with that?

ZEB: Yeah, editor Steve Wacker said that. I mean, it's Spider-Man, so of course we're allowed to have fun, but I think there is an imperative to have a lot of meat on the stories.

We want to capture a lot of that drama that defined the Stan Lee/Steve Ditko days, when it was all about Peter's life and you really felt for him. But at the end of the day, it's Peter Parker: there's gonna be wisecracking and whatnot. We're not gonna lose that.

BLACK AND WHITE BACHALO ART: As this issue of Spotlight went to press, the pencils of Chris Bachalo — Zeb Wells' art partner — had yet to be colored. Thus, we present a "sneak preview" series of black and white pencil and ink art from ASM #555 for you to enjoy!

"I think anybody who grew up with a little bit of angst and wasn't incredibly popular in school can identify with Peter Parker, and I've definitely been there!"
— writer Zeb Wells

SPOTLIGHT: You had an interesting road to becoming a comic book writer. Why don't you give our readers a little history lesson on that?

ZEB: Me and my friends were making a lot of films with our video cameras as a lot of kids do, and I saw that *Wizard* magazine had a contest to make a five-minute super-hero-themed video. I have a friend who looks exactly like the Hulk, so we painted him green (completely by hand which was disgusting) and did a short film about the Hulk trying to find a job. We won the contest and we got to go to Wizard World Chicago. Before they showed it I gave a speech and was kind of prodding Joe Quesada and editor Axel Alonso. I tried to be funny and charming — no big stretch! (*Laughter.*) So the next day I was walking around and the *Wizard* guys said Axel was looking for me. I almost threw up, but I found Axel and he asked me if I wanted to write a story for the anthology series *Spider-Man's Tangled Web*. I had never written anything before, but that's not an opportunity you turn down, especially because I had always been a comics fan. I put a lot of pressure on myself but I did it and it was worth it.

SPOTLIGHT: That was the nifty "I Was a Teenage Frog-Man" story. Since then you have also written the *Dr. Octopus Year One* limited series. I guess you have become fairly comfortable with Spider-Man?

ZEB: Yeah. I think anybody who grew up with a little bit of angst and wasn't incredibly popular in school can identify with Peter Parker, and I've definitely been there! The reason he's so popular is that he's so relatable. I'm sure if you asked just about any writer they would say they could relate to him and could write Spider-Man. He's a very sympathetic character.

SPOTLIGHT: You have written some youthful titles in the Marvel Adventures line and also the *New Warriors* limited series, but you have also done gritty books like *Daredevil: Battlin' Jack Murdock* and some adult-leaning stuff for Axel Alonso. Are these two sides you need to balance for a book like *Amazing Spider-Man?*

ZEB: With any project, you try to find the tone the project demands. With *Amazing Spider-Man*, I'm working with four other writers, so I need to work with them to find that tone. Another big thing for me is finding out who the artist is. That's one of the most fun things about the job. When you find out who the artist is, that informs how you write

the story. So there's the tone you think it should have and the tone the artist will bring. That's the springboard.

SPOTLIGHT: With that in mind, what about Chris Bachalo pointed you in the direction you've chosen for your first story?

ZEB: I thought there should be a lot of action. Chris' run on *Generation X* was defining for a lot of people who were reading comics at the time. One of the things he was really good at was the monsters and he had all those freaks in there. I wanted to give him some fun characters to draw.

SPOTLIGHT: He can certainly draw freaks! So the villain you conceived for your story – you came up with him with Chris's design sense in mind?

ZEB: Yeah. The whole story has sort of a Mayan theme. There's modern day Mayan warriors with all this jewelry that looks just awesome when Chris draws them. There are some Mayan God type characters that he really nails.

SPOTLIGHT: This is the biggest assignment you've received from Marvel by I don't know how many levels

ZEB: Definitely!

SPOTLIGHT: Is there pressure there that affects your approach?

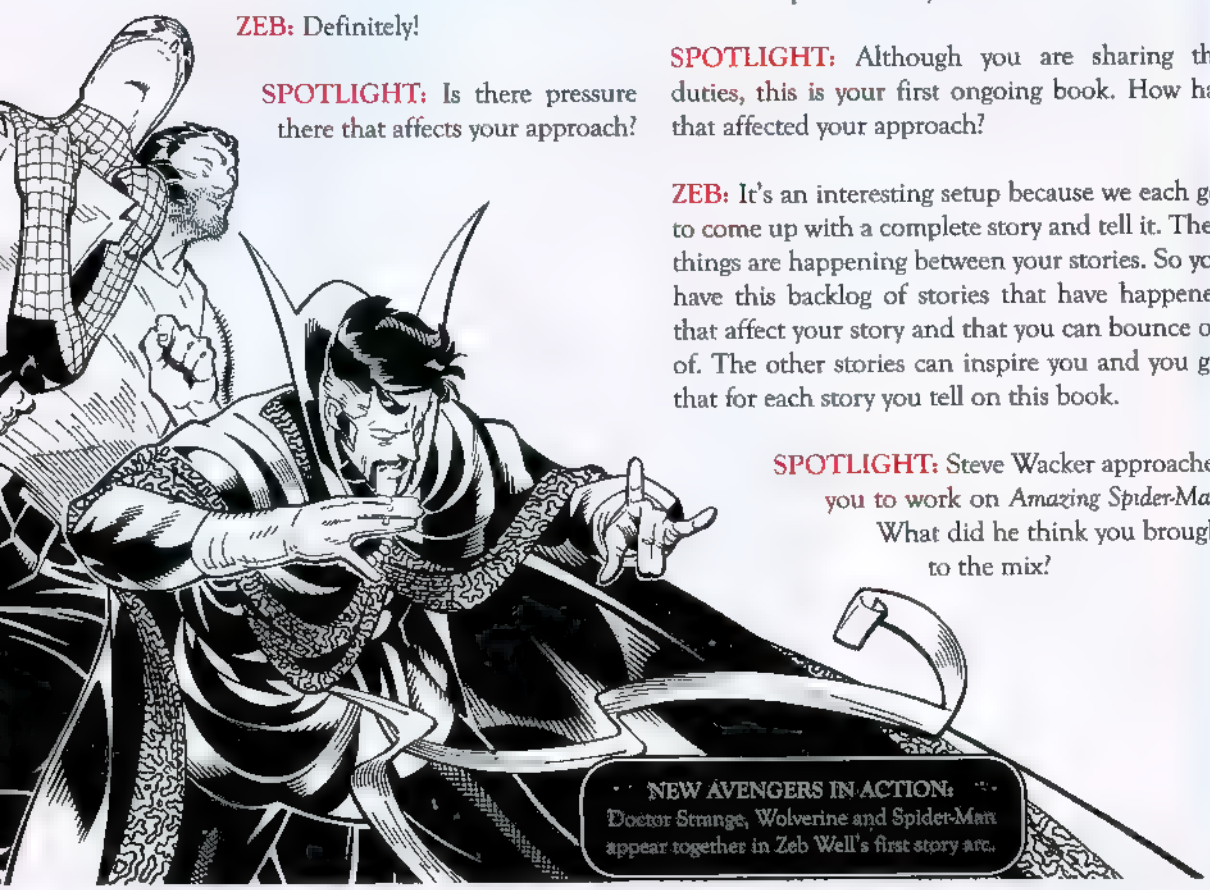
BREAKFAST WITH CHAMPIONS: Spidey and Wolverine tag-team on a box of Wheaties in ASM #555.

ZEB: I think so. That's one of the things you try to keep out of the mix, but you really can't. It's *Amazing Spider-Man* first of all. We're also following up JMS' run, which is obviously a defining run for the character and the book. Then I'm also working with three awesome writers and have to go blow for blow with them. So this is definitely the project that uses up most of my time.

SPOTLIGHT: Although you are sharing the duties, this is your first ongoing book. How has that affected your approach?

ZEB: It's an interesting setup because we each get to come up with a complete story and tell it. Then things are happening between your stories. So you have this backlog of stories that have happened that affect your story and that you can bounce off of. The other stories can inspire you and you get that for each story you tell on this book.

SPOTLIGHT: Steve Wacker approached you to work on *Amazing Spider-Man*. What did he think you brought to the mix?



NEW AVENGERS IN ACTION: Doctor Strange, Wolverine and Spider-Man appear together in Zeb Well's first story arc.

ZEB: Each one of the writers read and was into Spider-Man at different points in time. When I grew up I got into Spider-Man during the McFarlane era with David Michelinie writing it. Bob Gale was reading it back in the Lee/Ditko heyday. So I bring a slightly younger perspective, a younger voice. That probably sounds really insulting!

SPOTLIGHT: Not at all! That sounds like a good game plan. Different ages representing different eras. What has it been like coordinating story beats and character beats with the other writers? Apparently things need to be tweaked as you find out things about stories that precede yours.

ZEB: Yeah. You can plan all you want, but when you sit down and write you find that certain things don't fit or need to be changed. For the most part, though, I have to say that working with three other writers has made the whole thing more fun as opposed to frustrating. You can always throw out a mass e-mail with what you want to do and you always get a bunch of good ideas on how to do it back. Every once in a while you do need to make some tweaks, and that's fine. We don't want to make this seem like a string of Spider-Man mini-series. This is *Amazing Spider-Man*.

SPOTLIGHT: I do need to ask one off-topic question, since I'm talking to the writer who set up the New Warriors as the reality show stars who started the *Civil War* ball rolling. What was it like having the status quo you established for the New Warriors be the springboard for the biggest...thing ever?

ZEB: (*Laughter.*) It was kind of cool. Obviously it was weird seeing the whole team go up in flames like that. That was a little jarring. But, hey, I didn't think anyone even read that, so to know that someone had and wanted to use that status quo again was flattering to myself and to Skottie Young, the artist on the series. Sad to see Microbe cooked though....

Thanks Zeb! We can't wait to see what you have in store for Peter Parker! His run with artist Chris Bachalo will be in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN *#555-557!*

SPIDER-MAN Q&A WITH CHRIS BACHALO

What is the most important detail to get right when it comes to drawing both Peter Parker and his Spider-Man alter ego?

I confess that it feels a little inappropriate discussing *ASM* at this time as I'm still working on *X-Men*. It's the kind of scenario in which I have a really nice, steady, girlfriend, but I just met this fantastic girl at a party. The old relationship is nice, but the girl from the party is on my mind and I want to talk about her, but the steady girl is very important and I want to give her the time and well, maybe, I can date both.

This is going to be a really interesting book for me as it's the first time I'll be getting to spend this much time with one character since my *Shade* and *Death* days. It's been a long time. In the past 10+ years, I've more

or less spent time with large casts that I really enjoy for their diversity, but I sometimes find lacking in that I may find myself going months without spending time with certain characters. With Spidey, I anticipate getting to spend a lot of time with the character and getting to know him really well. I'm looking forward to this.

I think the trick with Peter will be in how I depict his interaction with the various relationships that he has in his life; his posture, demeanor and expressions will vary depending on who he is with. He may be an attentive son to Aunt May and maybe a little uneasy with JJJ. Selling these aspects of his character with gestures and expressions as they relate to the cast will be very important to get right. With Peter in his Spider-Man costume, it's about selling the dynamic, heroic and sensational aspects of the super hero that have made the character a pop culture icon.

"Brand New Day" is starting out by introducing all new villains. How are you going to approach these new additions to Spidey's rogues gallery?

I've yet to create the nemesis of our story, but looking ahead I know that Spidey has seen just about every bad guy with every conceivable power and costume over the years, so coming up with something new and completely original is quite a challenge and at this point in comic book history may be unrealistic. What's really important to making an interesting villain is to create one that is well-rounded and well conceived and that has an interesting agenda portrayed in a creative way. All this leans heavily on how he is written. I can create the best looking villain ever, but if he's a stick in the mud who's going to care? So no pressure, Zeb!! It's all on you, buddy.

Who is your favorite all-time Spider-Man artist and what makes him your favorite?

That would be Todd McFarlane. I really enjoyed the way that he infused the character and the book with a sense of energy and dynamism. Todd has a unique way of looking at the world and as a result his style and sense of design on Spider-Man was unlike anything I had ever seen. I couldn't help but feel that he really "got it" when it came to his interpretation of the character.

What classic Spider-Man villain are you itching to draw?

I think the Lizard would be really fantastic. I've always been into the monster types and he fits the bill. The big teeth, blood and guts stuff is always fun to create. Green Goblin would be nice. He's kind of scary and dark. I like scary and dark. I love the pumpkins – those nasty little things. Then there's Mysterio. He's really crazy. How about Doc Ock? Guess I don't have a favorite.

New York City itself is a big cast member in Spider-Man books. What characteristics of the city do you want to bring out?

Yeah, the city is really important. There's part of me that feels obligated to show off the city's scale like the way that Hitch made the city important in *The Ultimates*, but he's kinda crazy in his detail. I think I would go blind spending that much time on something like that. And then there's the other part of me that really wants to spend time showing off the city's dark corners. Maybe a happy slice of both are in order. Maybe it will snow a lot and it won't matter. We'll see how it all turns out.

IN REMEMBRANCE:

Mike Wieringo

(June 24, 1963 – August 12, 2007)

This issue of *Marvel Spotlight* is dedicated to the life, art and influence of a man who stood as one of today's modern masters of comic art.

AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
#546-548
SLOTT
MCNIVEN
JANUARY 2008
AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
#549-551
GUGGENHEIM
LARROCA
FEBRUARY 2008
AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
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GALE
JIMENEZ
MARCH 2008
AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
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WELLS
BACHALO
APRIL 2008